UNIVERSITEIT GENT

FACULTEIT PSYCHOLOGIE EN PEDAGOGISCHE WETENSCHAPPEN

Patterns of home leaving and problematic separation-individuation in emerging adulthood

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Proefschrift ingediend tot het behalen van de academische graad van Doctor in de PsychologiÊ

2012

Dankwoord

Op het moment dat ik dit schrijf is het iets meer dan zes jaar geleden dat ik startte met de voorbereidingen van wat uiteindelijk dit proefschrift zou worden. De deadline lag toen nog ver weg in de toekomst en ik had ook totaal geen idee over welk onderwerp ik precies een doctoraatstudie zou maken. De enige vereiste was dan ook dat het over de adolescentie moest gaan. Uiteindelijk greep ik terug naar één van de onderwerpen die ik ooit op een A4'tje opgesomd had ter voorbereiding van mijn sollicitatiegesprek, ik zou namelijk het Hotel Mama-fenomeen bestuderen. Dit onderwerp was niet autobiografisch gestuurd, aangezien ik op dat moment reeds het ouderlijke huis verlaten had en "semi-zelfstandig" woonde. Toch was ik voornamelijk geïnteresseerd of de vele jongeren die blijven plakken bij de ouders of terugkeren naar het ouderlijke huis hier gevolgen van ondervinden voor hun ontwikkeling. Het bleken er heel wat minder te zijn dan aanvankelijk gedacht.

De keuze voor dit onderwerp zorgde er echter voor dat ik me niet op adolescenten zou gaan focussen, zoals initieel de bedoeling was, maar op *emerging adults* of opkomende volwassenen. Emerging adulthood bleek vooral een fascinerende levensfase om onderzoek naar te doen. Het is een periode waarin, voor de meeste mensen, de wereld aan hun voeten ligt en nog heel wat opties mogelijk zijn. Dit zorgt er tegelijkertijd ook voor dat het een ontwikkelingsfase is die gekenmerkt wordt door heel veel twijfels en onzekerheden. Tijdens de afgelopen jaren heb ik de interesse voor deze relatief nieuwe periode in de ontwikkeling exponentieel zien toenemen in het onderzoeksveld.

Naast de groei in dit onderzoeksgebied ben ikzelf ook geleidelijk aan geëvolueerd in mijn werk en kreeg ik de smaak van het onderzoek steeds meer te pakken. In de afgelopen jaren heb ik veel geleerd (dat merk ik zeker als ik er bijvoorbeeld mijn eerste projecttekst op na lees) en heb ik veel kansen gekregen. Ik ben op plaatsen geweest waar ik anders niet geweest zou zijn en heb mensen ontmoet die ik anders niet zou ontmoet hebben. Voor mij was deze doctoraatstudie zeker en vast een waardevolle ervaring. Ik wil op deze plaats dan ook graag een aantal mensen bedanken die hier allen toe bijgedragen hebben.

In de eerste plaats zou ik graag mijn promotor, Prof. Dr. Wim Beyers, bedanken om mij de kans te geven om deze doctoraatsstudie aan te vatten. Wim, ik waardeer de vrijheid die je me gaf in het hele onderzoeksgebeuren en in mijn weg naar het tot stand

komen van dit doctoraat. Ik kreeg de kans om te werken rond thema's die ikzelf relevant vond en je steunde me steeds in mijn onderzoeksideeën. Opmerkingen en suggesties werden steeds vrijblijvend geformuleerd. Hierdoor voelt deze doctoraatsstudie echt aan als iets van mezelf, dat weliswaar samen met hulp van vele andere tot stand is gekomen. Misschien kan je supervisie best omschreven worden als een autonome aanmoediging van zelfstandigheid? In ieder geval, bedankt Wim voor de begeleiding tijdens de afgelopen jaren.

Vervolgens wil ik graag de andere professoren uit de groep Ontwikkelingspsychologie bedanken, Prof. Dr. Maarten Vansteenkiste en in het bijzonder Prof. Dr. Bart Soenens, voor hun vele suggesties, ideeën en feedback. Zonder jullie inbreng had dit doctoraat er ongetwijfeld op vele plaatsen helemaal anders uitgezien. Uit jullie enthousiasme en gedrevenheid voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek heb ik heel wat geleerd.

Naast Prof. Dr. Maarten Vansteenkiste en Prof. Dr. Bart Soenens, die beiden ook deel uitmaakten van mijn doctoraatsbegeleidingscommissie, wil ik ook graag de andere leden van de begeleidingscommissie bedanken, namelijk Prof. Dr. Ann Buysse en Prof. Dr. Luc Goossens. Bedankt voor de constructieve feedback tijdens het gehele proces. Vanuit jullie eigen expertise bekeken jullie dit onderzoeksproject soms vanuit een heel andere invalshoek, wat interessante suggesties en denkpistes opleverde.

Daarnaast zou dit onderzoek niet mogelijk zijn geweest zonder de bereidwillige medewerking van de vele emerging adults, die al of niet nog bij hun ouders woonden, en hun ouders. Hen zou ik in het bijzonder willen bedanken voor de tijd die ze namen om de vaak ellenlange vragenlijsten in te vullen en voor hun openhartigheid tijdens de interviews. Hierbij aansluitend zou ik tevens ook alle studenten uit de opleiding Psychologie willen bedanken die tijdens de afgelopen jaren een aanzienlijk deel van de emerging adults en ouders contacteerden voor deelname aan de verschillende studies in dit proefschrift. Dank ook aan alle collega's, vrienden en kennissen die hielpen met de dataverzameling.

Het maken van een doctoraat binnen een leuke werksfeer is een voorrecht. Daarom wil ik ook graag een aantal van mijn naaste collega's bedanken. Dank in het bijzonder aan mijn bureaugenoten, Joke, Dorien en Stijn. Samen deelden we vele werkuren maar ook vele babbels en verhalen. Het is fijn om zulke leuke en meelevende collega's te hebben. Ik denk ook aan de vele andere collega's (en sommige ondertussen reeds ex-collega's) die van onze vakgroep steeds een aangename plek hebben gemaakt

om te werken. Nu onze vakgroep vrij omvangrijk geworden is, zijn het vooral de collega's waarmee we geregeld over de middag samen gaan lunchen waarmee er een nauwer contact is. De leuke gesprekken met jullie, die misschien tot spijt van de mannelijke collega's steeds vaker over zwangerschappen, bevallingen en kinderen gaan, zorgen voor een aangename afwisseling tijdens de werkuren.

Op het thuisfront wil ik in de eerste plaats mijn ouders bedanken. Dankzij jullie heb ik de kans gekregen om verder te studeren. Julie hebben me altijd onvoorwaardelijk gesteund in alles wat ik deed. Zonder jullie zou ik niet staan waar ik nu sta. Dank ook aan mijn grote zus Stephanie en haar gezin. Jullie zijn er altijd al voor me geweest. Bedankt voor al jullie bemoedigende woorden. Ik weet dat ik op jullie kan rekenen en dat is me veel waard. Verder wil ik ook graag even stilstaan bij Maarten, we hebben een bijzondere vriendschap die ik koester. Al van in onze middelbare schooltijd delen we lief en leed met elkaar. Onze, soms urenlange, babbels in het echt, aan de telefoon, of via skype doen me altijd deugd. Ook al zien we elkaar door de afstand niet zo vaak meer, we weten wat we aan elkaar hebben.

Zelf ben ik ondertussen in mijn "thirties" en ik heb ik de periode van de emerging adulthood dus zo goed als afgerond. Tijdens mijn doctoraatsperiode heb ik dan ook een aantal belangrijke roltransities gemaakt, van het samenwonen op meerdere appartmentjes, tot trouwen, een huis kopen en moeder worden. Eén constante hierbij was jouw aanwezigheid, Jan. Je hebt me altijd vanop de eerste rij gesteund. Je hebt een enorm vertrouwen in me en biedt een luisterend oor wanneer ik dat nodig heb. Samen met Roman vormen we een hecht gezin. De laatste maanden zijn soms hectisch geweest, maar sinds jij er bent kleine vent, besef ik eens te meer wat echt belangrijk is in het leven. Ik hou zo ontzettend veel van je!

Evie Kins, maart 2012

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Chapter 1

General introduction

The point of departure of this dissertation was the demographic phenomenon of delayed home leaving in today's Westernized postindustrial societies. Correlates of co-residing with the parents during the stage of emerging adulthood and consequences for a person's developmental transition to adulthood were studied. The first part of this research has a rather descriptive character. It was conducted to attain a more detailed picture of our sample of emerging adults in the process of home leaving. More structural analyses were performed in the second part of the research. The process of separation-individuation, where a child separates itself psychologically from the parents in order to establish a unique sense of individuality, received a special focus of attention in these studies. In this introductory chapter, we first present the broader theoretical framework of this dissertation. Second, objectives and study aims are described while presenting a brief overview of the different empirical chapters in the present dissertation.

Delayed Home Leaving in Emerging Adulthood

Living at home with your parents in your twenties or thirties has become a widespread phenomenon in most Western countries. Several sociological studies have indicated that the average age at which young people leave the parental home and gain full residential independence has increased profoundly since the 1980s (Galland, 1997; Goldscheider, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Although there is an overall tendency to delay the time of home leaving in the West, the ages at which young people gain residential independence differ considerably in these postindustrial countries.

In Europe, three regional patterns emerge with respect to the transition to residential independence. Southern European countries, like Spain and Italy, are among the leaders regarding delayed home leaving. Young Italians, for instance, leave the parental home at the latest ages recorded in Europe (Billari, Rosina, Ranaldi, & Romano, 2008). Data from a large panel study in Europe indicated that it is not until the age of 27.1 in Italy and 26.6 in Spain that 50 percent of the young people are living away from home (Iacovou, 2001). Northern European countries, like Denmark and Finland, on the other hand have among the earliest ages of home leaving in the West. There, 50 percent of the youngsters have already left the parental home by the age of 20 (Iacovou, 2001). In Central European countries, like Belgium (where all studies in this dissertation were conducted) and France, the average age to attain residential independence is situated in-between the two extremes of the late leavers in the South and the early leavers in the North of the continent. At the age of 23.8 years 50 percent of the Belgian young people are living away from the parents. More recent demographics have indicated that the age to leave the parental home even tends to increase in Belgium, as it was found that it is not until the age of 25 that somewhat more than half of the young men and women no longer live in the parental home (Vettenburg, Elchardus, & Walgrave, 2007). In France young people leave somewhat earlier, there at 22.2 years half of them have left the parental home (Iacovou, 2001).

The fact that an exit from the parental home is almost unequivocally linked to marriage in Southern European countries, due to the predominant Catholic morals and values, is often considered as an explanation for this clear North-South gradient in ages of leaving the parental home (Billari et al., 2008). In Northern and Central Europe it is conversely fully accepted to leave the home for other purposes than marriage (e.g., education, to gain independence), which would explain why young people leave home earlier (Iacovou, 2001). Different welfare regimes in these regions are among other factors that are studied to explain the variability in age at leaving the parental home across Europe (Aassve, Billari, Mazzuco, & Ongaro, 2001). In Southern European countries social support is often insufficient, including low levels of state support for the young people. As a result, young people without a stable income remain highly dependent on family resources, and are often constrained to continue to live in the parental home (Rusconi, 2004).

In the United States timing of home leaving is more similar to countries in Northern and Central Europe than to Southern European countries (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997). Nevertheless, within the U.S. the median age to leave the parental home varies as well. Rather than a variation between different regions in the U.S., the variation is situated between groups of different ethnicity. Caucasian Americans seem to leave the parental home the earliest with a median age of 21.5 years, whereas African and Hispanic Americans leave the house on average a few years later. Fifty percent of the African Americans has left the parental home at the age of 22.9 and for Hispanic Americans this is at the age of 23.2 (Iacovou, 2001).

Besides the delay in age at leaving the parental home, young people in Western countries are postponing other transitions in life, like marriage and becoming parents, as well. Hence, an overall delay in the achievement of an adult status has become a trend for the young generation in most postindustrial societies (Buhl & Lanz, 2007, Fussell, Gauthier &, Evans, 2007; Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). Young people themselves denote that they feel neither an adolescent nor yet a complete adult too. To address to this new

phenomenon of feeling in-between, Arnett (2000) introduced the concept *emerging adulthood* to refer to this distinct phase in life, situated between the late teens and early twenties. Emerging adulthood distinguishes itself from adolescence and (young) adulthood because of its highly exploratory and unpredictable nature. During this stage in life young people get the most chances to experiment in the area of love, work, and worldviews without having to commit themselves to long-term adult roles and responsibilities. By the end of this period, the late twenties, most people have made life-long commitments and do feel that they have reached adulthood (Arnett, 2000).

Whereas the theory of emerging adulthood was developed in the United States, previous research (Buhl & Lanz, 2007) has indicated that the young generation across Europe shares five common features with this developmental phase described by Arnett (2004), namely: Identity exploration, instability, possibilities, feeling in-between, and self-focusing. Because the period of emerging adulthood can be generalized to other postindustrial societies, it can be concluded that the transition to adulthood is a gradual process that lasts several years for young people in all these countries. The extended amount of education that is required in the West is often referred to as an explanation for young people's delay in the onset of taking on adult roles, like getting married and becoming parents (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006). Nevertheless, the fact that the conceptualization of adulthood in current Western societies has changed profoundly, making the transition to adulthood more ambiguous than ever before, is another important factor to explain the existence of a prolonged phase of moratorium (Arnett, 1998; Blatterer, 2007).

Historically, role transitions have been considered as essential markers of adulthood. Marriage and childbearing, in particular, were allocated as the rites of passage to adulthood. Nowadays, this definition of adulthood only prevails in traditional non-Western societies, whereas the current generation in Westernized postindustrial societies has traded these role transitions as markers of adulthood, in favor of individualistic criteria (Arnett, 1998; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003; Nelson & Barry; 2005; Settersten et al., 2005). Extant research across different

ethnic groups and social classes has indicated that becoming an adult in contemporary postindustrial societies signifies becoming independent from others (especially from parents) and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person (Arnett, 1998, 2001, 2003). Contrary to role transitions, like marriage and parenthood, these individualistic characteristics are intangible and develop gradually over time. As a result, the entry into adult life is nowadays no longer well-delineated, neither for young people nor for their surroundings (Arnett, 1998; Shulman & Ben-Artzi, 2003).

In a time where the transition to adulthood is more ambiguous, gradual, and less uniform than ever, outward signs of independence from parents, like leaving the parental home, might however be important. According to Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1999), residential independence is indeed a critical step in the transition to adulthood. These authors consider the act of home leaving as a major statement, which clearly signals to both parents and children that the child has entered a new stage in life and that the relationship between both parties needs to be redefined. This reasoning is in line with separation-individuation theory (SIT; Blos, 1979; Mahler; 1963). Separation-individuation refers to an intrapsychic process where a sense of self is established separate from other primary love objects in order to achieve one's own individual characteristics or unique individuality (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). Even though this process reverberates throughout the life cycle, young people in particular need to loosen family dependencies in order to make commitments outside the family of origin (Blos, 1967; Tanner, 2006). According to SIT, living with your parents during the phase of emerging adulthood might thus be interpreted as a lack of independence and mature, adult-like functioning.

Separation-Individuation Theory

Separation-individuation is a fundamental organizing principle of human growth that has implications for adaptive functioning across the lifespan (Lapsley & Stey, 2010). In the narrow sense it refers to specific developmental challenges of early childhood and adolescence, respectively defined as the first (Mahler,

1963) and second process of separation-individuation (Blos, 1962, 1967). Throughout both processes, the child gradually reduces psychological dependence from parents, while trying to maintain a sense of connectedness to them. Hence, separation-individuation revolves around the resolution of a relational tension between distance and connectedness (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989). In the past there has been some debate about whether separation-individuation should be interpreted—in line with classical psychoanalytical writings about the *storm und stress* of adolescence—as a radical detachment or disengagement from parents in order to become an individuated person (Beyers, Goossens, Vansant, & Moors, 2003; Frank, Butler-Avery, & Laman, 1988). However, nowadays there is a consensus in developmental literature that the process of separation-individuation implies finding an optimal balance between gaining more independence on the one hand but remaining connected to the family of origin on the other hand (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989).

The First Process of Separation-Individuation

During the first separation-individuation process the child emerges from the symbiotic relation with the caregiver to become an individuated toddler, experiencing a "sense of identity" for the first time. The onset of this phase is situated at about four to five months of age and is terminated by the time the child turns three years old (Mahler, 1963). Infant-toddler observations illustrated that the first process of separation-individuation is characterized by clusters of age-specific behavior. Therefore, the process was further divided into four subphases: *differentiation, practicing, rapprochement, and consolidation of individuality & the beginnings of emotional object constancy* (Mahler, et al., 1975).

During the first months of life, the newborn finds himself in a symbiotic relationship with the caregiver. The child is in a state of absolute dependency on this need-satisfying object and behaves and functions as though he and the caregiver were an omnipotent system, a dual unity within one common boundary

(Mahler, 1963). At about four to five months of age some behavioral phenomena mark the beginning of the first subphase of the separation-individuation process, that is *differentiation*. The baby begins to differentiate the self from the caregiver, in a bodily sense, as it becomes less passive and more sensory aware. Due to visual and tactile experimentation, the child is able to discriminate between how the caregiver is different from the self and also how this is different from others (Mahler et al., 1975). At the end of the first year and the early months of the second year, the young child's awareness of bodily separation from the caregiver optimally goes parallel with its development of independent functioning.

During this second subphase of the separation-individuation process, *the practicing period,* the toddler practices emerging locomotor and other functions that serve individuation. Although the child periodically returns to the caregiver for emotional refueling when exploring the expanding environment, there is also the fear of being re-engulfed by him/her during this stage of separation-individuation (Mahler et al., 1975). By the middle of the second year of life, the toddler reaches the first level of identity, that of being a separate individual entity (Mahler, 1963). The relative lack of concern about the caregiver's presence characterizing the practicing subphase is now replaced by seemingly constant concern about the caregiver's whereabouts and by active approach behavior.

Therefore, the next separation-individuation subphase is referred to as *rapprochement*. During this period the young child is in a state of ambivalence, defending on the one hand his recently achieved independence but at the same time wishing for a reunion with the love object. This rapid alternating desire to push the caregiver away and to cling to him/her provokes splitting of the object world into good and bad in order to protect the good caregiver-image from the destructive anger. Separation reactions are typical behavioral observations in all children throughout this subphase. Gradually the toddler will realize that caregivers are separate individuals with their own personal interests and that s/he cannot go back to the delusion of the symbiotic omnipotence.

Ultimately the young child is able to find the optimal distance to the caregiver and learns to cope with its increasing awareness of separateness

through identification with the caregiver and internalization of rules and demands (Mahler et al, 1975). These mechanisms prevail when the child arrives at the final subphase of separation-individuation, a time of *consolidation of individuality and the beginnings of emotional object constancy*. In the third year of life, the need-satisfying love object is transferred to an intrapsychic representation by means of internalization. As such, the child is able to maintain the inner image of the absent caregiver. This internal representation implies *object constancy,* which means that both the "good" and "bad" object or both the aggressive and libidinal drives towards it, are unified. Only when object constancy is imminent, the caregiver can be substituted during absence by a reliable inner image that remains relatively stable irrespective of the child's state of need or discomfort. When this subphase proceeds, temporary separation from the caregiver can be lengthened and better tolerated. In addition, the establishment of unified images of the self, separate from object representations herald consolidation of individuality and separate individual functioning (Mahler et al., 1975).

The Second Process of Separation-Individuation

Based on his work with adolescents, Blos (1962) found that similar to early childhood, adolescents are in need of psychic restructuring due to pubertal maturation. Therefore, adolescence is conceptualized as the second phase of separation-individuation (Blos, 1967, 1979). Whereas the infant emerges from the symbiotic relationships with the caregiver to become an individuated toddler, the adolescent relinquishes himself from family dependencies and infantile object representations in order to become a member of society at large (Blos, 1967). Nevertheless, Mahler's separation-individuation subphases seem to be recapitulated within the adolescent context, including ambivalence over the gained autonomy (Josselson, 1980).

Puberty marks the onset of a redefinition of the self and the relationships with the caregivers. Due to both physical and cognitive development, adolescents no longer see themselves as children and caregivers too are no longer perceived

as the almighty figures they once were during childhood (i.e., deidealization). As such, the adolescent moves away from childhood self and other representations. Early adolescence is typically dominated by a need for demarcation between the prior set of representations and the current ones, which is referred to as the intrapsychic separation process (Levy-Warren, 1999). In order to accommodate the transformations of this time, the young adolescent needs to change the self and other object representations. It is the separateness of early adolescence that clears the way to elaborate on the adolescent's particularity. As a result, middle adolescents become highly preoccupied with learning to know themselves and defining who they are. These issues of self-discovery reflect the adolescent individuation process in action, which is predominant in middle adolescent development (Levy-Warren, 1999). Whereas peer group affiliation was salient during middle adolescence, as a way of solidifying aspects of their identity, this urge greatly diminishes in late adolescence. Instead, late adolescents show a renewed interest in family relationships as they evolve to a consolidation of the separation and individuation processes of early and middle adolescence. However, at this time the relationship with the parents shows increasing symmetry and is gradually transformed from the hierarchical parent-child relationship of childhood into a mutual relation between equal adults (Aquilino, 1997; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). During the integrative stage of late adolescence, young people feel far more clear about who they are and what they want. It is this self-awareness, awareness of the other and of the boundary between them that allows having intimate, committed relationships with others (Levy-Warren, 1999).

Dysfunctional Separation-Individuation

Successful resolution of the separation-individuation process is deemed critical for healthy psychosocial functioning. Empirical research has indeed pointed out that being able to maintain and regulate a healthy balance between closeness and distance in relationships with significant others is related to better adjustment (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Frank, Pirsch, &

Wright, 1990; Holmbeck & Leake, 1999; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989). Conversely, disturbances in the separation-individuation process seem to have serious implications for adult personality and social relationships (Pine, 1979). Problematic separation-individuation has for instance been found to relate to insecure attachment, maladjustment to college, and symptomatology (e.g., depression, anxiety, somatization, and obsessive-compulsion; Lapsley, Aalsma, & Varshney, 2001; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002).

There is some indication that delayed home leaving in emerging adulthood might be unfavorable for the resolution of the complex dialectical interaction between independence and relatedness. Because the transition to adulthood is prolonged, the process of transferring from a dependent to an independent status where parent-regulation is gradually replaced with self-regulated behavior typically continues beyond adolescence (Tanner, 2006). Particularly, when emerging adults are in the process of home leaving, issues of separation-individuation are likely to become prominent again in the parent-child relationship (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990). Ideally, the infantile nature of this relationship is given up in favor of a more symmetrical relation. Research has suggested that the renegotiation of the parent-child relationship at this age tends to be more problematic when young people and their parents live under the same roof (Aquilino, 1997; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). Emerging adults who co-reside in the parental household demonstrated for instance a more negative parent-child relationship than their independently living peers, reflecting less independence, less support and less mutual respect (Flanagan et al., 1993; Sullivan & Sullivan, 1980; White & Rogers, 1997). Similarly, when a child has left the parental home, it was found that parents felt more competent to re-evaluate the relationship with their child because they are more capable to acknowledge that their child has entered a new stage in life (Aquilino, 1997). As such, the act of home leaving may seem to facilitate the transformation of the parent-child relationship towards mutuality, a key component of the separation-individuation process.

From these findings, it could be argued that the process of separation-individuation is less likely to be resolved for emerging adults that live in the parental household. Moving out of the parental home may be considered an outward manifestation of the inner process of separation, suggesting that emerging adults who co-reside with their parents are less successful at achieving independence in their transition to adult life. When people fail to obtain a healthy degree of independence from others, they may need constant physical and emotional proximity of others to maintain their well-being. Such an excessive need for relatedness and dependence on others has typically been defined as separation anxiety, which involves feelings of distress when separated from attachment figures, persistent worrying about loss, and extreme fear of being alone (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

However, given that a healthy resolution of the separation-individuation process entails obtaining an optimal balance between closeness and distance in close relationships (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989), disturbances of the separation-individuation process may not only manifest as inadequate coping with the issue of independence but also as inadequate coping with the issue of relatedness. Hence, it is possible that dysfunctional separation-individuation may also manifest as an overly independent orientation, where people avoid close relationships and have an exaggerated focus on self-governance. Nevertheless, problematic separation-individuation has been almost unilaterally conceptualized as an overly dependent orientation. In this regard, we argue that research on separation-individuation can be informed by attachment theory based research and by research on personality vulnerability. In both literatures, a distinction has been made between an orientation primarily involving concerns with relatedness (i.e., attachment anxiety and dependency) (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and an orientation involving concerns with individuality (i.e., attachment avoidance and self-criticism) (Blatt & Maroudas, 1992).

Parenting Antecedents

Although the process of separation-individuation is defined as in intrapsychic process that is critical for an individual's development towards more independent functioning (Blos, 1967; Mahler, 1963), the relational nature of this process should not be underestimated (Tanner, 2006). Mainly the parent-child relationship goes through some major changes as the child reduces its psychological dependence on parents in order to become a self-sufficient person in the society at large. Hence, because the process of separation-individuation unfolds within the family context, parents are believed to play an important role in the resolution of the developmental task of separation-individuation. Parents' responses to separation-related issues, including their children's increasing independence, can be very diverse. Particularly when parents feel anxious and want to try to keep their children within close emotional and physical proximity, this could be harmful for the child to establish a self that is distinct and individuated from the parents.

Unpleasant emotional states like anxiety when being apart from the child, sadness with the imminent or existing loss, and anger or frustration about the inability to maintain close proximity are referred to as parental separation anxiety (Bartle-Haring, Brucker, & Hock, 2002; Hock, Eberly, Bartle-Haring, Ellwanger, Widaman, 2001; Hock & Lutz, 1998). Parents who are highly anxious about their adolescent's distancing deny their child's increasing strivings for independence and demonstrate age-inappropriate behavior towards their child. Research on parental separation anxiety has focused primarily on parents of infants and young children, whereas parents' feelings about separation from their adolescent or emerging adult children have by contrary been studied to a lesser degree (Hock & Lutz, 1998; McBride & Belsky, 1988; Stifter, Coulehan, & Fish, 1993; Wood, 2006). Nevertheless, associations with measures of parent and adolescent psychosocial functioning have suggested that parental separation anxiety is in general a maladaptive parental orientation (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Hock et al., 2001; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2006). Hock et al. (2001), for instance, found that self-other differentiation was lower in families

where parents scored high on anxiety about distancing. Parental separation anxiety has also been negatively related to identity development in late adolescence and early adulthood (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002). In line with these results, it is assumed that parental separation anxiety will negatively affect the separation-individuation process in emerging adulthood.

Parenting processes could, at least partly, explain this hypothesized association. Parents who are highly anxious about their child's distancing are particularly expected to engage in psychologically controlling parenting practices (Soenens, et al., 2006). Psychological control is conceptualized as a form of intrusive parenting behavior, characteristic of parents who are nonresponsive to their child's needs and instead use intrusive and manipulative tactics (e.g., guilt induction, shaming, and love withdrawal) to pressure their child to meet the parents' standards (Barber, 1996). Because psychologically controlling parents fail to take an empathic stance towards their children, their behavior interferes with the child's growing need for independence as it restricts the space that is necessary for a child to explore and express its individuality (Barber, 1996, 2002). Hence, even in emerging adulthood, psychologically controlling parenting practices may be particularly associated with the development of problematic separation-individuation. Yet, when emerging adults live in the parental household and are exposed to parental influences on a daily basis, their parents' functioning and rearing style may affect them more strongly compared to emerging adults who live independently.

Psychological control is considered harmful for the process of separation-individuation because it has typically been described as an inherently independence stifling parenting dimension (Barber, 1996, 2002). However, psychological control might just as well relate to a dysfunctional independent orientation of problematic separation-individuation depending on the domain in which parents use psychological control. Recent research has differentiated between two domain-specific expressions of psychological control, with one type of intrusive parenting behavior revolving around issues of interpersonal closeness (i.e., dependency-oriented psychological control) and other around issues of

personal achievement and perfectionism (i.e., achievement-oriented psychological control) (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Luyten, 2010). Parents high on dependency-oriented psychological control use intrusive tactics as a means to keep their children within close physical and emotional boundaries, whereas parents high on achievement-oriented psychological control engage in intrusive parenting tactics to make children comply with parental standards for achievement and individual performance. As dependency-oriented controlling parents do not allow their children to have experience with independent action and instead pressure their children to remain in close physical and emotional proximity, children are likely to develop an excessive focus on relatedness with their parents at the expense of exploring their individuality. As such, dependency-oriented psychological control might be particularly related to problematic separation-individuation of the dysfunctional dependent type. In families where love and acceptance are however made contingent upon meeting strict parental demands for achievement, children might become preoccupied with demonstrating their personal ability, thereby ignoring the need for relatedness. Hence, achievement-oriented psychological control might be associated with separation-individuation disturbances of the dysfunctional independent type.

Differentiating Independence from Autonomy

During adolescence and particularly emerging adulthood, young people gradually develop towards more independent functioning. In developmental literature this process is mainly described in terms of becoming more independent from parents (Blos, 1967; Tanner, 2006). Leaving the parental home forms an important step in this process, as it is one of the most clear and outward signs of given up dependence on the parents and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person. However, this reasoning, which is in line with the above mentioned SIT (Mahler, 1963; Blos, 1967), is only one way of looking at the increased levels of autonomy in adolescence and emerging adulthood. Self-

determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) offers, for instance, another perspective to the conceptualization of autonomy.

SDT is a theory of motivation that defines autonomy as volitional or self-endorsed functioning. Self-endorsed functioning refers to the extent to which people behave upon personally valued preferences, needs, and interests (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomously functioning individuals experience a sense of personal choice and psychological freedom. In SDT the opposite of autonomy is not dependence but instead heteronomy (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005). Heteronomy signifies controlled or pressured functioning either by external forces or internal compulsions. From this notion, it is clear that independent functioning, as expressed in leaving the parental home, is not necessarily equivalent with volitional or self-endorsed functioning (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006). Instead, the act of home leaving can be regulated in a rather controlled or autonomous manner. When the home leaving of the emerging adult is enacted with a sense of volition and represents self-endorsed or authentic values and beliefs, s/he displays both independent and volitional or autonomous functioning. However, some emerging adults might also leave the parental home because they feel pressured to do so either by external forces (e.g., parents) or by internal compulsions (e.g., to avoid feelings of shame and embarrassment). In these specific situations, independence is attained in a controlled and thus nonvolitional way. Similarly, continued coresidence with the parents during emerging adulthood (i.e., dependence) might be regulated in an autonomous or controlled way. According to SDT, autonomously regulated behavior is essential for a person's healthy development and well-being. Abundant research across various domains (e.g., education, sports and physical activity, and health and medicine) has confirmed this hypothesis, with controlled regulation being associated with many adverse outcomes such as poor coping strategies, low perseverance, low achievement, and low subjective well-being (for overviews, see Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Deci, 2008). Hence, when examining the home-leaving process in emerging adulthood it might be important to focus not only on whether a person has left the parental

home or not, but also to take into account whether this behavior is regulated in an autonomous or rather controlled way.

The Present Dissertation

The present PhD dissertation focuses on emerging adults during the home-leaving process. For this purpose, we worked with study samples comprising emerging adults between the age of 21 and 26. This is a somewhat older target group of emerging adults, given that this developmental phase is typically situated between the age of 18 and 25. However, it has been argued that for some this period of high exploration and instability might last until the late twenties (Arnett, 2000). We nevertheless deliberately choose to work with this age group, because changes in place of residence seem highly salient in the early to mid/late twenties. This is also the case in Flanders (i.e., the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) where all studies comprising this dissertation were conducted. Demographics for instance indicated that whereas only a minority of the emerging adults lives away from the parents before the age of 22, half of the Flemish emerging adults has moved out by the age of 25 (Vettenburg, et al., 2007). Besides focusing on this specific age group, study samples were also gathered with the intention to obtain substantial variability with respect to gender, level of education, and residential status. Including both higher and lower educated emerging adults fulfils the need to take into account the forgotten half in research on emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004). Although it is easy and convenient to sample college students, this exclusive focus on university students has deleterious implications for the generalizability of research findings to young people who did not attend any higher education.

Given that the home-leaving process takes on an important role in this dissertation, it was deemed necessary to comprise a sufficient number of emerging adults that co-reside with their parents as well as emerging adults that no longer live in the parental household. However, in a time when young people have more options than ever concerning their living arrangements, not all living situations can be easily classified as living with parents versus living away.

Particularly the considerable amount of young people nowadays that have not yet fully moved out of the parental home, as they frequently return to stay over, is hard to categorize. Therefore, for the purpose of data collection, staying over in the parental home on average once a month or less was arbitrarily chosen as a criterion to classify an emerging adult as living away from the parents. However, to take into account the heterogeneity of emerging adults' living situations, this categorization was further refined on the basis of statistical argumentation into three types of living situations: co-residing with parents, semi-independently living, and independently living (see Chapter 4 for details and statistical evidence).

The present dissertation comprises a compilation of journal articles. Some of these articles have been published or are currently in press. Others are still under review or have not yet been submitted, because they were only written up recently. All papers focus on emerging adults in the process of home leaving and built on one another although they each highlight different aspects that are relevant to study in this context. In the remainder of the present chapter, each of the studies that are presented in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation will be briefly introduced.

First, we examined our target population of emerging adults in the process of home leaving into more detail. Chapter 2 focuses on the transition to adulthood during the home-leaving process. Using a one-year follow-up study, we studied whether young people in their early to mid-twenties are truly involved in the transition to become an adult and can thus be considered emerging adults. In addition, we examined whether the transition to adulthood is possibly affected by emerging adults' living situations. On the basis of SIT, it was expected that emerging adults who co-reside with their parents will proceed less in the transition to adulthood compared to peers who live independently. Associations between attaining an adult status and well-being were also discussed. Chapter 3 goes more deeply into the home-leaving process as such, using qualitative methodology. In interviews conducted during a home visit, we explored emerging adults' subjective experiences of living with the parents versus residing

(more) independently. Interview questions concentrated on the parent-child relationship in the different types of living arrangements, the reasons young people have for their residential status, and the actual moment of leave-taking from the parental home. Interesting themes emerged from the data, which were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 2004).

Second, we investigated whether emerging adults' satisfaction with their living situation and their overall subjective well-being varies depending on their living arrangements. From the perspective of SIT it was expected that emerging adults who co-reside with their parents experience less satisfaction and well-being. However, on the basis of SDT, it was hypothesized that the behavioral regulation underlying an emerging adults' residential status (i.e., autonomous versus controlled) would relate more strongly to satisfaction and well-being than the objective living situation. In Chapter 4 these two rather contrasting perspectives were tested in a cross-sectional dataset using structural equation modeling. The impact of controlling versus autonomy supportive parenting dimensions was additionally considered in this study.

Third, we focused on the separation-individuation process and on parenting and family dynamics that may have an influence on this developmental process. It was considered extremely relevant to study separation-individuation in the context of emerging adults in the process of home leaving, given that this is a time when separation-issues are likely to become prominent in the parent-child relationship (Aquilino, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). That is, emerging adulthood is a critical turning point in the human life span during which parent-regulation is gradually replaced with self-regulation and the parent-child relationship is transformed into a mutual adult-like relationship (Aquilino, 2006; Tanner, 2006). Chapter 5 concentrates on parenting dynamics that might affect the emerging adults' separation-individuation process. It is hypothesized that highly separation anxious parents might disturb their child's separation by using controlling parenting strategies to keep their child within close emotional and physical proximity. Structural equation modeling with cross-sectional data was used to test this mediation model. In addition, we explored for the possible

moderating effect of emerging adults' residential status. This parent-effects or unidirectional model implicates one-way effects from parent to child. However children might also influence parents and thus separation anxiety might be reciprocally determined within the relationship or characteristic of the whole family. Hence, to fully address the dynamics of separation anxiety in family relationships, we applied the social relations model (SRM; Kenny & La Voie, 1984) because SRM allows for examination of family relations on the individual, dyadic, and family level simultaneously. Findings of this study are reported in Chapter 6.

When studying the separation-individuation process in the context of home leaving, one might intuitively think that living with the parents during emerging adulthood is possibly associated with separation-individuation issues of the overly dependent type. Problems in the separation-individuation process have indeed been narrowly defined as separation anxiety or as intolerance for being alone. However, because separation-individuation is about finding an optimal balance between independence and relatedness (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), problems in this developmental process might manifest as dysfunctional dependence but also as dysfunctional independence. Chapter 7 provides evidence for these two qualitatively different expressions of disturbed separation-individuation by relating both types to a nomological network of relevant variables and by using a person-centered approach to identify different separation-individuation profiles. In Chapter 8 we examined associations between psychologically controlling parenting and the two types of problematic separation-individuation. Although psychological control is considered an inherently independence-stifling parenting dimension that gives rise to an overly dependence in children, it was hypothesized that psychological control might also relate to an overly independent orientation depending on whether parents use such intrusive parenting tactics as a way to keep their children within close physical and emotional boundaries or as a means to comply with parental standards for achievement and performance. Regression analyses were used to

test this hypothesis and possible moderating effects of emerging adults' residential status were investigated as well.

The final chapter (Chapter 9) attempts to present an integrated overview of the findings obtained in the empirical chapters. Based on the results of this dissertation, guidelines for counseling and intervention are also formulated. Finally limitations are discussed and some interesting conclusions and directions for future research are suggested.

Chapter 2

Failure to launch, failure to achieve criteria for adulthood?[1]

In the West it is not until the mid-20s or 30s people reach an adult status. Becoming an adult signifies being independent from others (especially from parents) and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person. This study investigates whether the attainment of such individual qualities are affected by emerging adults' living circumstances. Results indicate that though independent living is associated with an accelerated achievement of certain criteria for adulthood, continued coresidence with parents during emerging adulthood slows down the process by which an individual moves towards becoming a self-sufficient and independent adult. Because success in the achievement of an adult status also positively predicts emerging adults' well-being, delayed home leaving during this stage of life is an issue that requires special attention.

[1]Kins, E., & Beyers, W. (2010). Failure to launch, failure to achieve criteria for adulthood? *Journal of Adolescent Research, 25,* 743-777.

Economic and sociocultural changes in the West have resulted in the postponement of individuals to take on adult responsibilities. Arnett (2000) created the term *emerging adulthood* to refer to this period between adolescence and adulthood that is characterized by exploration, instability, possibilities, and self-focusing. In the past, the transition to an adult status was clearly marked by the arrival of certain role transitions an individual goes through, like, marriage and childbearing and becoming a parent. Although these role transitions are no longer predominant in today's definition of adulthood, it remains to be questioned whether delaying such transitions can affect the attainment of an adult status. As adulthood is nowadays defined as becoming independent, and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person (Arnett, 2004), special attention is warranted for the effect of delaying the transition towards residential independence on the achievement of an adult status. Therefore, this study investigated whether continued coresidence with parents during emerging adulthood can impede the achievement of an adult status. Furthermore, because research on the relationship between achieving an adult status and personal well-being is sparse, we examined whether emerging adults who are successful in achieving criteria for adulthood experience more subjective well-being compared with peers who fail to achieve those criteria.

Delayed Entry into Adulthood

Whereas adulthood used to begin after a relatively brief adolescent period in the past, there is nowadays in Western postindustrial societies a general tendency to delay the transition to an adult status (Buhl & Lanz, 2007; Fussell, Gauthier, &, Evans, 2007; Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). The extended amount of education required in the West is often referred to as an explanation for young people's delay in the onset of taking on adult roles, like getting married or becoming parents (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006). Historically, such role transitions have been considered the essential markers of adulthood. Marriage and childbearing, in particular, were allocated as the rites of passage to adulthood. These events clearly indicated that point in time when a

boy became a man and a girl became a woman. However, nowadays only traditional cultures seem to retain this definition of adulthood (Arnett & Galambos, 2003), whereas the current generation in Western postindustrial societies has renounced these role transitions as markers of adulthood, in favor of individualistic criteria (Arnett, 1998; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Settersten et al., 2005). As a result, the entry into adulthood became more ambiguous, gradual, and less uniform (Settersten et al., 2005).

During the extended period towards adulthood, it is very likely that young people feel that though they are no longer adolescents, they are not fully independent adults yet and that they are in a phase of transition only. Arnett (2000) introduced the concept *emerging adulthood* to refer to this distinct phase in life, which is situated between the late teens and early 20s. Emerging adulthood is distinguished from adolescence and (young) adulthood by its highly exploratory and unpredictable nature. During this life stage, young people get the most chances to experiment in the area of love, work, and worldviews without having to commit themselves to long-term adult roles and responsibilities.

Whereas the theory of emerging adulthood was developed in the United States, previous research (Buhl & Lanz, 2007; Sirsch, Dreher, Mayr, & Willinger, 2009) indicated that the young generation across Europe shares the five main features of this phase (identity exploration, instability, feeling in between, self-focusing, and possibilities; Arnett, 2000). Hence, although emerging adulthood is not considered a universal period, it can be generalized to other cultures where the onset of taking on adult roles and responsibilities is postponed. In Belgium, a small country situated in the Northwest of Europe where this study was conducted, the prolonged transition to adulthood is noticeable too. That is, postponement of traditional adult roles like marriage and becoming a parent is a fact in today's Belgian society. Between 1996 and 2005 the mean age of first marriage for women increased from 26 to 28.3 years, and for men from 28.2 to 30.8 years, whereas the mean age of women having their first child increased to 28 years in 1999 (National Institute for Statistics [NIS], 2008). As said earlier, the high level of education partially might explain this

delay. In Belgium, 42% of the 18- to 25-year-olds are still students, of whom the majority is enrolled in higher education (Vettenburg, Elchardus, & Walgrave, 2007).

At the end of emerging adulthood, the mid-to-late 20s, most people feel that they have reached adulthood. However, as traditional markers of adulthood are renounced, what does becoming an adult in today's Western society actually mean? Arnett (1998, 2001, 2003, 2004) extensively studied this question in various parts of the United States, and across different ethnic groups and social classes. On the basis of sociological, anthropological, and psychological perspectives on adulthood, he created a questionnaire to examine how adulthood is currently conceptualized. Guided by theoretical rather than statistical considerations, the items of this questionnaire (expressing possible criteria for adulthood) were organized into subscales, including independence, interdependence, role transitions, norm compliance, family capacities, biological, and chronological transitions. Respondents indicate whether they believe each of these criteria must be achieved before a person can be considered an adult. Three criteria that consistently emerged as most important markers of adulthood for (young) people today are as follows: accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and being financially independent (Arnett, 1998, 2001, 2003). As all these items refer to independence, it can be concluded that achieving an adult status in today's Western societies signifies becoming independent from others (especially from parents) and learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person (Arnett, 2004).

Although role transitions are no longer predominant in the conceptualization of adulthood, they possibly continue to play an important role in the achievement of an adult status. In line with this assumption, a sociological study indicated that young people who have experienced role transitions, like establishing an independent household, getting married or cohabiting, or becoming a parent, are actually more likely to report feeling like an adult (Settersten et al., 2005). In a recent Belgian study (Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens, & Pollock, 2008), which focused exclusively on the impact of entrance into work

life on achieving a sense of adulthood, it was also confirmed that emerging adults who made this specific role transition view themselves more as adults. Furthermore, when emerging adults grow to more self-understanding, they seem to attribute this growth largely to eventful experiences such as the transition to university or living independently (Gottlieb, Still, & Newby-Clark, 2007).

An important question that remains is whether the achievement of the individualistic character qualities that primarily define adulthood in today's context is in fact accelerated when emerging adults have experienced certain role transitions. In this study, we examined the impact of one specific type of role transition, that is, leaving the parental home for the transition to residential independence.

Leaving the Parental Home

Several sociological studies indicated that the average age at which young people leave the parental home and gain full residential independence has increased profoundly in the West since the 1980s (Galland, 1997; Goldscheider, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). As a result, it is, in today's context, no longer exceptional to co-reside with parents in your 20s or even in your 30s. In Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, a recent demographic report indicated that the trend of delayed home leaving even continued to increase between 1990 and 2007. In particular, the number of women co-residing with parents seems to have increased in these past decades. Nevertheless, (emerging) adult men still outnumber women when it comes to living in the parental home. Whereas 55% of the 20- to 24-year-old women co-resided with parents in 1990, this increased to 64% in 2007. For men in this age group this percentage rose more steadily from 74% in 1990 to 78% in 2007. The amount of 25- to 29-year-old emerging adults living with the parents increased as well, between 1990 and 2007, from 14% to 29% for women and from 28% to 35% for men (Lodewijckx, 2008). In Southern European countries, this trend of delayed home leaving is even more pronounced than in Northern Europe or the United States (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997). For instance, data from a large European panel study

indicated the latest home-leaving patterns are found in Mediterranean countries, and particularly in Italy where it is not until age 27 that half of all Italian women are found to be living away from home, and for nearly half of Italian men, it does not happen until almost age 30 (Iacovou, 2001).

Possibly, this overall trend of delayed home leaving is detrimental for the achievement of an adult status. That is, emerging adults who no longer live in the parental household could be more capable of achieving individualistic character qualities that currently conceptualize adulthood than do young people who continue to co-reside with parents. According to Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1999), residential independence is indeed a critical step in the transition to adulthood. A similar prediction can be made on the basis of separation-individuation theory (SIT; Blos, 1967, 1979). The renegotiation of the parent-child relationship when a child moves to adolescence is a key component of the SIT. As a child grows up and gains more individuality, the hierarchical parent-child relationship should be transformed into a more symmetrical relationship between two caring and respecting adults (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Tanner (2006) situated the onset of this process at the beginning of emerging adulthood and refers to it as *recentering*. Recentering highlights the relational restructuring between the emerging adult and his or her family of origin that takes place as a result of the shift in orientation from parent regulation to self-regulation. During this process of recentering, the parent-child relationship is challenged to transform itself to an adult relationship in which adult children are afforded the freedom to make choices and decisions on the basis of their own beliefs and values while maintaining an ongoing relatedness.

Evidence has shown that leaving the parental home can serve as a catalyst for the transformation of the parent-child relationship towards mutuality. Aquilino (1997), for instance, found that when a child has left the parental home, parents are more competent to re-evaluate the relationship with their child because they are more capable to acknowledge that their child has entered a new stage in life. Although the results of this study indicated that most major life transitions generate an opportunity to change the former infantile parent-child

relationship into a more adult-like relationship, home leaving marks a transitional phase that has the most power to reorganize earlier styles of relating. Similarly, Flanagan, Schulenberg, and Fuligni (1993) found that the redefinition of the relationship with parents was more problematic when parents and children were still living under the same roof. Young people living with their parents felt that their parents continued to treat them as children; this explains why they experience less independence and mutuality in the relationship with their parents.

However, it is not just parents who seem to find it difficult to relinquish their care-taking role when their adult child is living in the parental household, but young people themselves who are co-residing with their parents often continue to behave in immature and dependent ways, mostly out of habit and not willing to take full responsibility for themselves. This prevents the fledging adult from developing new relationships and from taking greater responsibility for his or her life (Clemens & Axelson, 1985). Hence, it seems likely that emerging adults who live with parents not only fail to establish a symmetrical parent-child relationship, but what is more, they seem to be less successful in achieving an adult status in general (Elm & Schwartz, 2006; White, 2002).

Well-Being

Continued coresidence with parents during emerging adulthood thus possibly hampers the achievement of an adult status and of a sense of independence in particular. However, is failing to achieve an adult status inevitably detrimental to emerging adults' overall well-being? Given that current Western societies are very strongly oriented toward youthfulness (Fry, 1996), one could intuitively reason that becoming an adult will have a negative connotation. Hence, it might be the case that individuals who relinquish adult responsibilities and avoid making lifelong commitments will experience the highest level of personal well-being. At the same time, this dissolute type of lifestyle can also generate confusion and disequilibrium, as it provides little certainty and purpose in life (Erikson, 1968).

Literature on the relationship between the transition to adulthood and subjective well-being is sparse, and to date research has only yielded indirect evidence for the latter proposition. That is, during the transition to adulthood, emerging adults in general demonstrate improved psychological well-being as a part of their growing psychosocial maturity (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Galambos & Krahn, 2008). In particular, emerging adults demonstrated significant decreases in depressive symptoms and anger and significant increases in self-esteem over time. Because increased decision-making power and independence are rated as the most important criteria for reaching adulthood (Arnett, 2003), these scholars presume that mainly transition-linked increases in these features accompany increases in psychological well-being. Further research that verifies this assumption is lacking, however.

Another longitudinal study that specifically focused on salient and quite visible developmental tasks during the transition to adulthood (i.e., education, work, financial autonomy, romantic involvement, peer involvement, substance abuse avoidance, and citizenship) found that individuals who were more successful in achieving these tasks maintained or gained a salutary trajectory of well-being across all three waves of the study (Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004). Particularly success in work, romantic involvement, peer involvement, and citizenship appeared crucial to maintain high well-being.

The Present Study

The present study has three primary research goals. First, we studied whether people in their early-to-mid-20s, irrespective of their living arrangements, are actually involved in making the transition to become an adult, as presumed by Arnett (2000). Therefore, we explored the changes emerging adults make in the achievement of criteria for adulthood during 1 year. On the basis of the theory of emerging adulthood, we hypothesized that the majority of emerging adults in our sample will have proceeded in the transition towards adulthood, and thus, that participants will increasingly endorse that they achieved the criteria for adulthood. Second, we investigated the impact of delayed home

leaving on the achievement of an adult status. It was hypothesized that emerging adults living with their parents will feel less adult, and thus, will have achieved less criteria of adulthood, compared with peers who have already taken steps towards independent living. Next, we also studied whether progress in achievement of adult criteria after 1 year, is moderated by the change that is made in one's living situation during that year. It is hypothesized that emerging adults who move towards a more independent type of living situation will make more progress compared with peers who continue to live with their parents or who came back to live in the parental home again after a period of independent living. The last main goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between the transition towards an adult status and subjective well-being. On the basis of the findings of the few studies on this topic, it was hypothesized that emerging adults who are less successful in achieving criteria for adulthood, and perhaps in particular criteria that refer to independence, will experience less subjective well-being.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Our sample comprised 224 emerging adults living in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Because we are primarily interested in uncovering the relationship between emerging adults' residential status and the achievement of adult criteria, we deliberately chose to obtain a sample with a virtually equal number of emerging adults who co-reside with their parents and emerging adults who no longer permanently live in the parental home. For the purpose of data collection, living away from the parents was arbitrarily defined as staying at the parental home a maximum of once a month, on average. In what follows, the categorization of emerging adults' living situation will be refined on the basis of statistical argumentation. This procedure resulted in a sample with approximately half of the participants co-residing with their parents (58%) and half living independently (42%). Furthermore, we also aimed to balance our sample with respect to gender and level of education. Hence, practically an equal

number of men (52%) and women (48%) participated in this study sample, as well as a comparable number of highly educated (58%) and low-educated emerging adults (42%). Especially, this last group, which consists of college dropouts and of persons who dropped out during or after having completed high school, is often neglected in research focusing on emerging adulthood. To obtain this balanced sample, a stratified sampling technique was used with living situation (with parents vs. independent), gender (male vs. female), and education (low vs. high) level as the stratification variables. As these three variables were used simultaneously to stratify the sample, eight combinations or strata were obtained from which we attempted to retrieve an equal number of subjects. As a result, almost as much highly educated men and women as lower educated men and women were included in both the co-residing with parents subgroup and the independently living subgroup.

All participants were born in 1983 or 1984 and were 22 to 23 years old (M = 22 years and 10 months, SD = 8 months) at the onset of the study. This age group was chosen because in Belgium an exit from the parental home before the age of 22 occurs rarely (5%). Nevertheless, at the age of 25 more than half of the Belgian emerging adults no longer live with their parents (Vettenburg et al., 2007). Hence, between the ages of 22 and 25 changes with respect to the living situation start occurring for a lot of young people, which makes this age group particularly interesting for this study. Participants were contacted by the first author or by psychology students. All emerging adults received a letter explaining the purpose of the study, an informed consent form, and a questionnaire. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and could be refused at any point in time. Questionnaires were administered at the participant's home and returned to the student or by mail. The majority of the emerging adults who agreed to participate in this study came from intact families (75%); that is, both parents were living together in the same household.

One year later, all 224 emerging adults were contacted again by psychology students or by mail to fill out a new questionnaire. From the initial sample, 82% of the participants (N = 183) were willing to participate in the next

wave of data collection. Participants of both data waves (Time 1 and Time 2) were compared with those who dropped out after the first point of measurement (Time 1) in terms of gender, level of education, type of living situation, and family structure. Emerging adults who participated in both data waves were more likely to be highly educated than those who dropped out, $\chi^2(1, N = 224) = 7.83$, $p < .01$. With respect to the other background variables, there were no significant differences between the two groups. Further attrition analyses revealed that dropouts and those who continued with participation did not differ significantly with respect to the study variables measured at Time 1: the various criteria for adulthood: $F(32, 155) = 1.09$, *ns*, and subjective well-being: $F(3, 220) = 0.67$, *ns*. Moreover, Little's (1988) test indicated that data were missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(2{,}283, N = 224) = 2410.86$, *ns*. Therefore, the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm was used for data imputation, a robust method to obtain maximum likelihood estimates (Schafer, 1997). As a consequence, the sample used for all analyses was $N = 224$.

Measures

All questionnaires were administered in Dutch, participants' mother tongue. Questionnaires not available in Dutch were translated according to the guidelines of the International Test Commission (Hambleton, 1994). All questionnaires are self-report measures and were administered both at Time 1 and Time 2.

Living situation. To obtain a clear picture about the participants' living arrangements both at Time 1 and Time 2, emerging adults were asked to respond to some detailed questions about their residential status. First, they were asked to indicate where they currently lived by choosing one of the following categories: with both of my parents, with one of my parents, alone, with my partner, in a student's apartment, or other. Next, emerging adults not living with parents were asked to specify how far their present residence was located from the parental home: within walking distance, in a neighboring town, between 20 and 50 km, between 50 and 100 km, and more than 100 km. Emerging adults living away

from their parents were also asked to report how often they stay over at their parents' home. Answers ranged from once a week, once in 2 weeks, once a month, occasionally or never. Finally, one specific criterion of Arnett's (2003) questionnaire to measure the conceptualization of adulthood was also considered, namely, "No longer living in the household of your parent(s)." Participants had to indicate whether they had achieved this criterion on a 3-point scale.

Adulthood. To measure the achievement of an adult status, we used an adapted version of Arnett's questionnaire containing criteria for adulthood. That is, instead of asking emerging adults whether they think each of the criteria must be achieved before a person can be considered an adult, we sought to know whether participants in our sample had achieved each of these criteria themselves. Response options were: no, in some respects yes and in some respects no, and yes. Although Arnett's questionnaire also contains the item, "Do you think that you have reached adulthood?", we believe that specifying the achievement of each criterion for adulthood allows for a detailed picture of the achievement of adulthood to emerge. Some criteria appeared to be irrelevant for the participants in our sample (e.g., "Reached the age of 18" and "Reached the age of 21") and were, therefore, excluded.

The various criteria of adulthood, drawn from specific literatures, are organized into subscales on the basis of theoretical considerations rather than on statistical ground (Arnett, 2001). Subscales included the following: independence, interdependence, role transitions, norm compliance, family capacities, biological, and chronological transitions (Arnett, 2001, 2003). Internal consistencies of these subscales have shown to be moderate, with consistently low alpha levels reported for the independence (.42 to .53) and interdependence (.64 to .67) subscale (Arnett, 2003; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Sirsch et al., 2009). Reliability analyses pointed out that alpha levels of these subscales were even worse in our sample, both at Time 1 and Time 2: alpha values for independence subscale were. 36 to .44, and .11 to .22 for the interdependence subscale. Internal consistencies of the other subscales were moderate, ranging from .56 to .67. Furthermore, attempts to replicate Arnett's conceptually derived domains using

factor analyses failed both at Time 1 and Time 2, with poor overall fit and very low factor loadings, particularly for the independence and interdependence factors. Other studies also failed to replicate these factors (Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003). Hence, it can be concluded that although Arnett's conceptual model shows high face validity (e.g., Barker & Galambos, 2005), statistical evidence for this model is lacking. Therefore, it was decided to continue our analyses on the item level instead of calculating subscale scores. Consequently, the analyses will have a more descriptive character. Nevertheless, they are considered to be interesting, as the items of this questionnaire refer to various ways of thinking about adulthood.

Subjective well-being. Three scales were used to assess subjective wellbeing, namely, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), the Subjective Vitality Scale (SVS; Ryan & Frederick, 1997), and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). The SWLS is a commonly used questionnaire that consists of five items, each tapping how (un)satisfying people cognitively judge their lives. All items were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item reads, "In most ways my life is close to ideal". Reliability and validity of this scale has been repeatedly demonstrated (e.g., Diener et al., 1985; Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991). In our sample of emerging adults Cronbach's alpha was .84 at Time 1 and .86 at Time 2. Second, the SVS measures well-being from a rather affective perspective. A sample item reads, "Currently, I feel so alive I just want to burst". All 7 items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This questionnaire was previously translated in Dutch by Niemiec et al. (2006). Both the original English and Dutch version of this short questionnaire have shown good reliability and validity (Niemiec et al., 2006; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Cronbach's alpha in our study was .81 both at Time 1 and Time 2. Third, distress and depressive symptoms were measured with the 12-item version of the CES-D. Items reflect somatic, cognitive, and emotional symptoms of depression. Respondents indicated how often they had

suffered from these symptoms during the past week on a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 (*never or seldom*) to 3 (*mostly or always*). Hanewald (1987) translated this scale to Dutch. Previous research demonstrated concurrent validity and reliability of the Dutch version of the CES-D (Bouma, Ranchor, Sanderman, & van Sonderen, 1995). In our sample Cronbach's alpha was .87 at Time 1 and .86 at Time 2.

All three scales were considered as measures of the same underlying construct, that is, subjective well-being. Factor analyses supported this idea, with all 3 scales loading substantially on one factor explaining 66.96% and 69.79% of the variance at Time 1 and Time 2, respectively. Consequently, instead of working with separate scores for SWLS, SVS, and CES-D, we computed a factor score that can be regarded as a composite score of the three scales reflecting overall subjective well-being.

Results

Types of Living Situations

During data collection, living arrangements of emerging adults were categorized as co-residing with parents or living independently, depending on the monthly rate of their staying over in the parental home. However, today young people's residential status is no longer restricted to either living with parents or starting an independent household. Living separately from the parents but returning to the parental home frequently, without having to take all the responsibilities associated with living completely independent, has become a popular alternative for many emerging adults (de Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, & Dourleijn, 2001). These more intermediate forms of living situations have often been denoted as semiautonomous (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986). Hence, in order to take into account the heterogeneity of emerging adults' residential status we performed a latent class analysis (LCA with LEM software; Vermunt, 1997) using the questions that tap into different aspects of the living situation as indicators. On the basis of the results of LCA, participants were categorized into one of three living situations both at Time 1 and Time 2: co-residing with

parents, semi-independent, or independent. For more details on this type of analysis and clear evidence for a solution with three underlying categories of living arrangements at Time 1, see Kins, Beyers, Soenens, and Vansteenkiste (2009). At Time 2 the same 3-category solution was replicated. The selection of the number of classes was made on the basis of a number of robust criteria for class enumeration: Bayesian information criterion (BIC), bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT), and average posterior probabilities (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). First, comparing BIC values across the different models tested shows that a model with three latent classes yields a better fit (L^2 = 132.72, df = 596, p = 1.00, BIC = –3,066.51) than a model with two (BIC = –3,028.75) or four latent classes (BIC = –3,000.33). Next, the highly significant ($p < .001$) BLRT's comparing a model with two and three latent classes gave further evidence for our 3-class solution. Finally, average posterior probabilities added support to the model with three classes (.95) over a 4-class model (.92).

As was the case at Time 1, probabilities at Time 2 also reflected that the first latent class included participants living permanently with one or both of their parents (p = .98) and who believe that they have not yet achieved independent living (p = .70). This group was labeled co-residing with parents. The second class comprised emerging adults with various residential statuses (living in a student's apartment, p = .29; alone, p = .23; with a partner, p = .20; or other, like sharing a house with friends, p = .14). Nevertheless, this class clearly represented young people who live between 20 to 100 km away from the parental home (p = .72) but return every weekend to stay over with their parents (p = .40) and who score in between with respect to the question tapping the achievement of an independent living situation (p = .44). Therefore, this category was labeled semi-independent. The final class consisted of emerging adults who live either alone (p = .18) or with a partner (p = .80), mainly within walking distance from the parental home or in a neighboring town (p = .73). These participants reported that they never or rarely stay over with their parents (p = .93), and they consider themselves to have achieved the status of living independently (p = .99). They were labeled independent.

On the basis of these results, conditional probabilities were used to assign all emerging adults in our study to one of the three subtypes of residence. At Time 2, 34% of the emerging adults were categorized as co-residing with parents, 30% as semi-independent, and 36% as independent (at Time 1, these percentages were, respectively, 36%, 24%, and 40%; see Kins et al., 2009). Even though only 20% of the participants reported to be students at Time 2, they comprised almost half (i.e., 47%) of the emerging adults in the semi-independent living condition, contrary to 19% of those co-residing with parents and 4% of those living independently (at Time 1, 35% of the participating emerging adults were still enrolled in education, with 76% of the semi-independent being students versus 25% and 19% in the co-residing and independent group, respectively). The living situation of emerging adults seemed to remain fairly stable in our 1-year follow-up study. That is, 66% remained in the same type of living arrangement as the year before (25% stable co-residing with parents; 13% stable semi-independent, and 28% stable independent), whereas 15% moved towards a more independent type of living (i.e., progression from co-residing with parents/semi-independent to independent living or from co-residing with parents to semi-independent) and 19% regressed towards a less independent type of living situation.

Descriptive Statistics

First, the rate of achievement of the different criteria for adulthood was explored in our total sample of emerging adults both at Time 1 and Time 2. Taking a look at the various items in detail (Table 1), it seems that most criteria comprising norm compliance, and especially criteria reflecting biological/chronological transitions, were at Time 1 and Time 2 obtained by the majority of our participants. Due to the lack of variability in these criteria, they were dropped from all further analyses. Criteria that reflect independence, interdependence, role transitions, and family capacities show a more mixed pattern, with some criteria being highly endorsed by most participants, some by approximately half of the emerging adults and some by practically nobody. For instance, although most participants accept responsibility for their actions and

make independent decisions, other criteria reflecting independence are yet to be obtained by many emerging adults in our sample. This is particularly true for the achievement of criteria that reflect the relinquishing of the earlier hierarchical parent-child relationship (i.e., establish adult relationship with parents and not deeply tied to parents emotionally) and the attainment of financial independence from parents. The percentages in Table 1 also show that emerging adults in our sample are highly involved in making the transition from school to work, as there is a substantial number of them who report being finished with education and employed full-time. Other role transitions like marriage and having children were, however, rarely achieved. As criteria that are grasped as interdependence and family capacities were only endorsed by half of the participants or less; these too are characteristics that still have to be attained by many emerging adults in our sample.

As a result of our balanced sampling technique, approximately half of the participants reported having achieved residential independence at Time 1 and Time 2. Because we also used this item as in indicator in the LCA to identify the types of living arrangements of the emerging adults in our sample, it was decided to remove this criterion from all further analyses where the achievement of the various criteria for adulthood is considered conditional on one's type of living arrangement.

Preliminary Analyses

We first examined effects of background variables. A MANCOVA was conducted with the criteria for adulthood at Time 1 and Time 2 as dependent variables and emerging adults' gender, education level, age, family structure (intact or not), and relationship status (having a partner or not) at Time 1 as independent variables. Significant multivariate effects showed up for gender, $F(54, 164) = 2.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .48$; education level, $F(54, 164) = 3.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .55$; family structure, $F(54, 164) = 1.74$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .36$; and relationship status, $F(54, 164) = 6.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .67$.

Table 1

Percentages of Emerging Adults Not having Achieved (0) – Having Achieved in Some Respects, But In Others Not (1) – and Having Achieved (2) Each of Arnett's Criteria for Adulthood.

Criteria For Adulthood	*Wave 1*			*Wave 2*		
	0	**1**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**2**
Independence						
Establish relationship with parents as an equal adult	13	46	38	9	41	50
Being financially independent from parents	27	25	47	18	16	66
No longer living in the parents' household	37	16	45.5	31	17	52
Not deeply tied to parents emotionally	26	51	20	7	47	46
Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions	2	17	79.5	0	9	91
Decide on personal belief/values independently of parents or other influences	3	28	68	1	19	80
Interdependence						
Committed to a long-term love relationship	25	19	55	18	15	67
Make lifelong commitments to others	10	37	51	4	27	69
Learn to always have good control of your emotions	17	57	25	5	56	39
Become less self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others	3	60	35	0	50	50
Role Transitions						
Finished with education	32	16	50	16.5	16.5	67
Married	91	3	4	87	5	8
Have at least one child	92	2	5	90	2	8
Employed full-time	38	11	49	21	4	75
Settle into a long-term career	47	28	24	20	34	46
Purchased a house	79	7	12	6	11	20
Norm Compliance						
Avoid becoming drunk	27	38	33	14	36	50
Avoid using illegal drugs	5	15	78	5	9	86

(continued)

Table 1

Percentages of Emerging Adults Not having Achieved (0) – Having Achieved in Some Respects, But In Others Not (1) – and Having Achieved (2) Each of Arnett's Criteria for Adulthood.

Criteria For Adulthood	*Wave 1*			*Wave 2*		
	0	**1**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**2**
Norm Compliance						
Avoid drunk driving	6	18	75	9	18	73
Avoid committing petty crimes like shoplifting and vandalism	1	3	93	3	2	95
Have no more than one sexual partner	24	10	65	12	6	82
Drive safely and close to speed limit	18	39	43	12	28	60
Avoid use of profanity/vulgar language	15	43	41	8	46	46
Use contraception if sexually active and not trying to conceive a child	7	10	82	4	11	84
Biological/Chronological Transitions						
Grow to full height	5	3	91	3	1	96
Biologically capable of having children	13	11	71	6	6	88
Have had sexual intercourse	6	3	88	5	2	93
Obtained driver's license	17	2	79	13	3	84
Family Capacities						
Capable of supporting a family financially	39	27	32	26	22	52
Capable of caring for children	29	39	31	24	41	35
Capable of running a household	8	39	52	5	27	68
Capable of keeping a family physically safe	29.5	41	27	13	32	55

First, women tend to have achieved more criteria reflecting norm compliance than men do. Men, on the other hand, seem to be more successful in the area of work/career. Furthermore, significantly more men seem to be able to make independent decisions, to have good control of their emotions, and to protect a family physically. Second, highly educated emerging adults reported being more norm compliant than peers with less years of education. Emerging adults who received no education beyond high school, nevertheless seem to have attained a more solid financial base. They also have experienced more role transitions and evaluate their family capacities higher than their highly educated peers. Third, emerging adults coming from intact families judged their achievement on various criteria of adulthood higher than emerging adults from nonintact families did. Particularly, family capacities were endorsed more often when emerging adults originated from families where both parents live together. Moreover, emerging adults from intact families also scored higher with regard to the achievement of some norm compliance criteria, and also with respect to establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult, accepting responsibility for the consequences of their actions and becoming less self-oriented. Fourth, participants involved in a romantic relationship scored particularly higher regarding the achievement of role transitions and family capacities. Furthermore, these emerging adults report having a more equal relationship with their parents and being more financially independent from parents. Probably as a logical consequence of their relationship status, they also endorsed commitment to a long-term love relationship, making lifelong commitments to others, and having no more than one sexual partner more often than their single peers. In sum, because these four background variables have a substantial impact on the achievement of the various criteria of adulthood, we controlled for the effect of gender, level of education, family structure, and relationship status in all subsequent analyses.

Achievement of Adult Criteria and Living Situation

Time 1. We conducted a set of MANCOVAs to investigate whether the achievement of adult criteria at Time 1 differs depending on the emerging adults' living situation at that time. A separate analysis was performed for each set of items Arnett organized into the same subscale. Results show significant multivariate effects of living situation on criteria representing independence, $F(8, 426) = 2.45$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$; interdependence, $F(10, 424) = 4.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$; role transitions $F(12, 422) = 4.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$; and family capacities, $F(8, 426) = 8.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$.

Results of the univariate analyses, presented in Table 2, showed that, among the various criteria referring to independence, living situation only had an effect on being financially independent from parents. Post hoc Tukey tests indicated that emerging adults living independently rely the least on their parents for financial resources, followed by emerging adults who co-reside with their parents. Emerging adults living semi-independent display the lowest financial independence from parents. Regarding the achievement of interdependence, significant univariate effects of type of living situation were found on criteria reflecting commitment to others or to long-term love relationships, with the independent group scoring higher than both the semi-independent and those co-residing with parents.

Furthermore, univariate effects of living situation on all role transitions in Arnett's questionnaire were found. Post hoc testing revealed that the independent living participants reported being married, having a child, a long-term career, and a house more frequently than did the semi-independent and the emerging adults co-residing with parents. With respect to finishing education and being employed full-time, both the independent living and those living with their parents scored higher than the semi-independent. A small univariate effect emerged on one of the norm compliance criteria (i.e., using contraception), but it was not confirmed by the multivariate test including all norm-compliance criteria.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of the Various Criteria of Adulthood (organized by Subscale) across Different Living Situations (Time 1)

	Co-residing with Parents		Semi-independent		Independent Living			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(2, 216)	η^2
Independence								
Establish relationship with parents as an equal adult	1.17	0.77	1.28	0.63	1.34	0.60	1.46	.013
Financially independent from parents	1.08^{b}	0.82	0.71^{a}	0.83	1.60^{c}	0.67	18.04***	.143
Not deeply tied to parents emotionally	0.88	0.70	0.93	0.72	1.02	0.65	1.47	.013
Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions	1.83	0.38	1.78	0.42	1.75	0.53	0.46	.004
Decide on personal beliefs/values independently of parents or other influences	1.63	0.59	1.67	0.48	1.67	0.54	0.17	.002
Interdependence								
Committed to long-term love relationships	0.96^{a}	0.87	1.24^{a}	0.85	1.65^{b}	0.66	5.73**	.050
Make lifelong commitments to others	1.25^{a}	0.68	1.41^{ab}	0.66	1.59^{b}	0.62	4.38*	.039
Learn to always have good control of your emotions	1.15	0.64	1.09	0.65	1.00	0.66	0.51	.005
Become les self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others	1.36	0.54	1.32	0.58	1.29	0.50	0.01	.000
Role Transitions								
Finished with education	1.22^{a}	0.89	0.79^{b}	0.86	1.40^{a}	0.86	5.75**	.051
Married	0.02^{a}	0.16	0.03^{a}	0.20	0.23^{b}	0.62	4.77**	.042
Have at least one child	0.05^{a}	0.27	0.00^{a}	0.03	0.24^{b}	0.64	5.56**	.049
Employed full-time	1.19^{b}	0.94	0.54^{a}	0.82	1.35^{b}	0.87	7.46***	.065

Note. Means that do not share superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$; Tukey contrasts). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. (*continued*)

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of the Various Criteria of Adulthood (organized by Subscale) across Different Living Situations (Time 1)

	Co-residing with Parents		Semi-independent		Independent Living			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(2, 216)	η^2
Role Transitions								
Settle into a long-term career	0.72_a	0.84	0.49_a	0.66	0.97_b	0.82	4.24*	.038
Purchased a house	0.24_a	0.53	0.03_a	0.19	0.56_b	0.86	8.83***	.076
Norm Compliance								
Avoid becoming drunk	1.05	0.78	0.89	0.80	1.17	0.75	2.02	.018
Avoid using illegal drugs	1.71	0.59	1.71	0.60	1.76	0.50	0.08	.007
Avoid drunk driving	1.60	0.58	1.67	0.67	1.79	0.48	1.51	.014
Avoid committing petty crimes like shoplifting and vandalism	1.92	0.33	1.93	0.38	1.98	0.15	1.13	.010
Have no more than one sexual partner	1.20	0.92	1.43	0.86	1.60	0.75	0.56	.005
Drive safely and close to speed limit	1.17	0.73	1.37	0.78	1.24	0.72	0.28	.003
Avoid use of profanity/vulgar language	1.23	0.75	1.32	0.58	1.27	0.73	0.10	.001
Use contraception if sexually active and not trying to conceive a child	1.60_a	0.69	1.90_b	0.40	1.82_b	0.49	4.04*	.036
Family Capacities								
Capable of supporting a family financially	0.79_b	0.82	0.46_a	0.69	1.31_c	0.78	17.35***	.138
Capable of caring for children	0.96	0.82	0.98	0.74	1.13	0.76	2.79	.025
Capable of running a household	1.19_a	0.65	1.30_a	0.63	1.78_b	0.45	26.55***	.197
Capable of keeping a family physically safe	0.95	0.79	0.79	0.74	1.08	0.73	1.67	.015

Note. Means that do not share superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$; Tukey contrasts). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Finally, type of living situation during emerging adulthood also affected the achievement of family capacities. Two significant univariate effects were found. That is, independently living participants endorsed being more capable of supporting a family financially than did those co-residing with parents, who, in turn, scored higher than those living semi-independently. Participants belonging to the independent group also outscored all others in the capability of running a household.

Change from Time 1 to Time 2. We also wanted to investigate whether the degree of change in achievement of adult criteria over a 1-year period depends on change or stability in the type of living situation (Δ = living situation). That is, emerging adults either moved towards a more (progression group) or a less (regression group) independent type of living, or they continued to live with parents (stable with parents), semi-independent (stable semi-independent), or independent (stable independent). For this purpose, repeated measures MANCOVAs were performed, including both the main effects of time (the within-subjects factor) and Δ living situation (between-subjects factor) as well as their interaction. Results of the various repeated-measures analyses, performed separately for each the theoretically distinguished groups of items, revealed significant multivariate effects of time on items reflecting interdependence, $F(4, 211) = 7.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$; role transitions, $F(6, 209) = 3.47$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$; and norm compliance, $F(8, 207) = 4.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. Furthermore, a significant multivariate effect of Δ living situation emerged for all subscales, except for norm-compliance: independence, $F(20, 697) = 2.10$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$; interdependence, $F(16, 645) = 1.71$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$; role transitions, $F(24, 730) = 2.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$; and family capacities, $F(16, 645) = 4.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Finally, none of the subscales showed significant multivariate Time × Δ Living Situation interactions.

Subsequent univariate analyses for items tapping interdependence showed only a significant effect of time on being committed to a long-term love relationship, $F(1, 214) = 26.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$, indicating an overall increase in the engagement in stable partner relationships from Time 1 ($M = 1.30$) to Time

2 (M = 1.52). Next, regarding role transitions, results revealed that after 1 year more emerging adults had married (Time 1, M = 0.09 vs. Time 2, M = 0.21), had at least one child (Time 1, M = 0.11 vs. Time 2, M = 0.22), and had settled into a long-term career (Time 1, M = 0.72 vs. Time 2, M = 1.21)—$F(1, 214) = 4.59$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$; $F(1, 214) = 4.05$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$; $F(1,214) = 8.22$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$, respectively. Finally, time had a significant effect on two of the norm-compliance items: avoid drunk driving, $F(1, 214) = 6.64$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$, and having no more than one sexual partner, $F(1, 214) = 21.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$. Surprisingly, the overall mean score on the achievement of avoiding drunk driving was lower at Time 2 (M = 1.61) compared with Time 1 (M = 1.68).

Univariate effects of Δ living situation on the various criteria of adulthood are presented in Table 3. In case of significant effects, post hoc comparisons were requested in SPSS to indicate which of the types of Δ living situation differ significantly from one another. For the criteria representing independence, results of these pairwise comparisons showed that the stable independent succeeded significantly better in establishing a relationship with their parents as equal adults than those in the stable with parents group. Furthermore, the stable independent group scored higher on the achievement of financial independence than did participants in all other types of Δ living situation. Regarding the interdependence criteria, our findings indicate that the emerging adults in the stable with parents group were less committed to a long-term love relationship compared with the stable independent, progression, and regression group. In fact, the stable with parents group had in general made fewer lifelong commitments to others than the stable independent and regression group.

For all role transitions, the overall means differed depending on Δ living situation. First, the stable semi-independent group scored significantly lower concerning finishing off education than all others. Next, the overall mean for being married was significantly higher for the stable independent than for participants in the other categories. Furthermore, the stable independent and the

Table 3

Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Deviations of the Criteria for Adulthood across Change/Stability in Living Situation

	$Stable_{parents}$		$Stable_{semi\text{-}indep.}$		$Stable_{indep.}$		Progression		Regression			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(4, 214)	η^2
Independence												
Establish relationship with parents as an equal adult	1.22_{b}	0.07	1.28_{ab}	0.10	1.46_{a}	0.07	1.32_{ab}	0.09	1.33_{ab}	0.08	2.52*	.045
Financially independent from parents	1.17_{b}	0.08	1.04_{b}	0.11	1.68_{a}	0.08	1.27_{b}	0.10	1.28_{b}	0.09	7.59***	.124
Not deeply tied to parents emotionally	1.09	0.07	1.05	0.09	1.25	0.06	1.10	0.08	1.30	0.07	2.10	.038
Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions	1.84	0.04	1.84	0.06	1.89	0.04	1.81	0.05	1.79	0.05	0.79	.015
Decide on personal beliefs/values independently of parents or other influences	1.71	0.05	1.73	0.07	1.77	0.05	1.70	0.06	1.72	0.06	0.31	.006
Interdependence												
Committed to long-term love relationships	1.22_{b}	0.07	1.31_{ab}	0.09	1.53_{a}	0.07	1.49_{a}	0.09	1.47_{a}	0.08	2.85*	.055
Make lifelong commitments to others	1.39_{c}	0.07	1.40_{bc}	0.09	1.66_{a}	0.06	1.56_{abc}	0.08	1.62_{ab}	0.07	2.75*	.049
Learn to always have good control of your emotions	1.25	0.07	1.15	0.09	1.24	0.06	1.28	0.08	1.11	0.07	0.91	.017
Become les self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others	1.38	0.05	1.39	0.07	1.49	0.05	1.38	0.07	1.35	0.06	1.11	.020
Role Transitions												
Finished with education	1.37_{a}	0.10	0.94	0.13_{b}	1.50_{a}	0.09	1.45_{a}	0.12	1.30_{a}	0.11	3.27*	.058
Married	0.03_{b}	0.06	0.09_{b}	0.08	0.36_{a}	0.06	0.13_{b}	0.08	0.15_{b}	0.07	4.18**	.072
Have at least one child	-0.01_{b}	0.06	0.18_{ab}	0.08	0.27_{a}	0.06	0.07_{b}	0.08	0.31_{a}	0.07	4.00**	.069
Employed full-time	1.34_{ab}	0.09	0.90_{c}	0.08	1.57_{a}	0.08	1.35_{ab}	0.11	1.21_{b}	0.10	5.57***	.094

Note. Means that do not share superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$; contrast testing). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

(continued)

Table 3

Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Deviations of the Criteria for Adulthood across Change/Stability in Living Situation

	$Stable_{parents}$		$Stable_{semi\text{-}indep.}$		$Stable_{indep.}$		Progression		Regression			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(4, 214)	η^2
Role Transitions												
Settle into a long-term career	0.88_{b}	0.09	0.68_{b}	0.11	1.26_{a}	0.08	0.94_{b}	0.10	1.09_{b}	0.09	5.40***	.092
Purchased a house	0.23_{b}	0.09	0.30_{b}	0.12	0.71_{a}	0.08	0.35_{b}	0.11	0.42_{b}	0.10	4.60**	.079
Norm Compliance												
Avoid becoming drunk	1.18	0.09	1.05	0.12	1.27	0.08	1.15	0.11	1.31	0.10	0.98	.018
Avoid using illegal drugs	1.75	0.06	1.61	0.08	1.85	0.06	1.72	0.08	1.79	0.07	1.49	.027
Avoid drunk driving	1.55	0.07	1.65	0.10	1.75	0.07	1.64	0.09	1.64	0.08	0.93	.017
Avoid committing petty crimes like shoplifting and vandalism	1.89	0.04	1.87	0.05	1.98	0.03	1.91	0.04	1.98	0.04	1.70	.031
Have no more than one sexual partner	1.44	0.08	1.64	0.11	1.68	0.08	1.61	0.10	1.40	0.09	2.14	.039
Drive safely and close to speed limit	1.34	0.08	1.23	0.11	1.46	0.08	1.49	0.10	1.16	0.09	2.35	.042
Avoid use of profanity/vulgar language	1.23	0.08	1.27	0.10	1.40	0.07	1.26	0.09	1.26	0.08	0.80	.015
Use contraception if sexually active and not trying to conceive a child	1.71	0.05	1.93	0.07	1.82	0.05	1.75	0.07	1.80	0.06	0.14	.031
Family Capacities												
Capable of supporting a family financially	0.77_{c}	0.09	0.78_{bc}	0.11	1.54_{a}	0.08	1.07_{b}	0.11	1.04_{b}	0.09	12.43***	.189
Capable of caring for children	0.97_{bc}	0.09	0.98_{abc}	0.12	1.25_{a}	0.08	0.85_{b}	0.11	1.15_{ac}	0.10	2.85*	.051
Capable of running a household	1.29_{c}	0.06	1.30_{c}	0.08	1.84_{a}	0.06	1.42_{bc}	0.08	1.59_{b}	0.07	12.44***	.189
Capable of keeping a family physically safe	1.10_{bc}	0.07	0.98_{c}	0.10	1.33_{a}	0.07	1.23_{abc}	0.09	1.24_{ab}	0.08	2.59*	.046

Note. Means that do not share superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$; contrast testing). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

regression group had on average more often children than did those in the stable with parents or progression group. Regarding employment, the stable independent group reported having a full-time job significantly more often than did those in the regression group, who in turn were more often employed full-time than were the stable semi-independent. Emerging adults in the stable with parents and progression group did not differ significantly from the stable independent and regression group with respect to the achievement of full-time employment. However, when speaking about settling into a long-term career, the stable independent group outscored all the other groups. The same is true for purchasing a house.

Finally, effects of Δ living situation were found for all the criteria summarized as family capacities. The stable independent group had the highest scores on all four criteria reflecting achievement of family capacities. First, they reported to be capable of supporting a family financially more often than did emerging adults in the progression and regression group, who in turn scored higher compared to the stable with parents group. Next, the stable independent were more capable of caring for children than did those in the stable with parents and the progression group. Nevertheless, overall mean scores of respondents in the regression group on this criterion did not differ significantly from the stable independent, as well as the scores of the stable semi-independent that did not differ from any of the other groups. Top scores concerning being capable of running a household were again achieved by the stable independent, followed by the regression group, which in turn scored higher than the stable semi-independent and the group of emerging adults living stable with parents. Participants who progressed toward a more independent household scored significantly lower than the stable independent on this criterion, but their overall mean score did not differ significantly neither from the regression group nor from the stable with parents and stable semi-independent living emerging adults. Finally, the stable independent reported being more capable of keeping a family physically safe than did emerging adults in the stable with parents group, who in turn valued their capability higher than the stable semi-independent. The overall

mean score of the regression group did not differ significantly from the stable independent and the stable with parents group, but this score was still significantly higher than that of the stable semi-independent. The progression group did not differ significantly from any other category on this criterion.

Although none of the subscales showed a significant multivariate Time × Δ Living Situation interaction, four significant univariate interactions were detected. Because tests of these interaction effects are rather conservative, we nevertheless decided to interpret them. Moreover, these effects merit our interest because they reflect different patterns of change over time in the achievement of criteria for adulthood for the various categories representing change/stability in living situation. Univariate Time × Δ Living Situation interaction effects emerged for achieving financial independence from parents, $F(4, 214) = 3.65$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$; being committed to a long-term love relationship $F(4, 214) = 3.39$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$; avoiding drunk driving, $F(4, 214) = 2.98$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$; and being capable of running a household, $F(4, 214) = 3.29$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Figure 1 shows the change in achievement of these four criteria for adulthood from Time 1 to Time 2 for the five different categories of Δ living situation.

Results show that the progression group increased most in gaining financial independence from parents, making commitments to a long-term love relationship, and being capable of running a household. The stable independent living nevertheless kept scoring highest on these criteria at Time 2, except for commitment to a long-term love relationship. Those who move back towards a less independent living situation make the least progress or even regress somewhat. However, their scores at Time 2 continued to be higher or close to the scores of those in stable with parents and the stable semi-independent groups. Avoiding drunk driving, on the other hand, became more difficult for most emerging adults, except for those in a stable semi-independent residential status. The regression group relapsed most with respect to the avoidance of drunk driving; consequently, at Time 2 their scores were equal to those of the stable with parents group. The progression group decreased least on this criterion. Their scores at Time 2 were between the low scores of those in the stable with parents

and regression group and the high scores of those in stable semi-independent and independent groups.

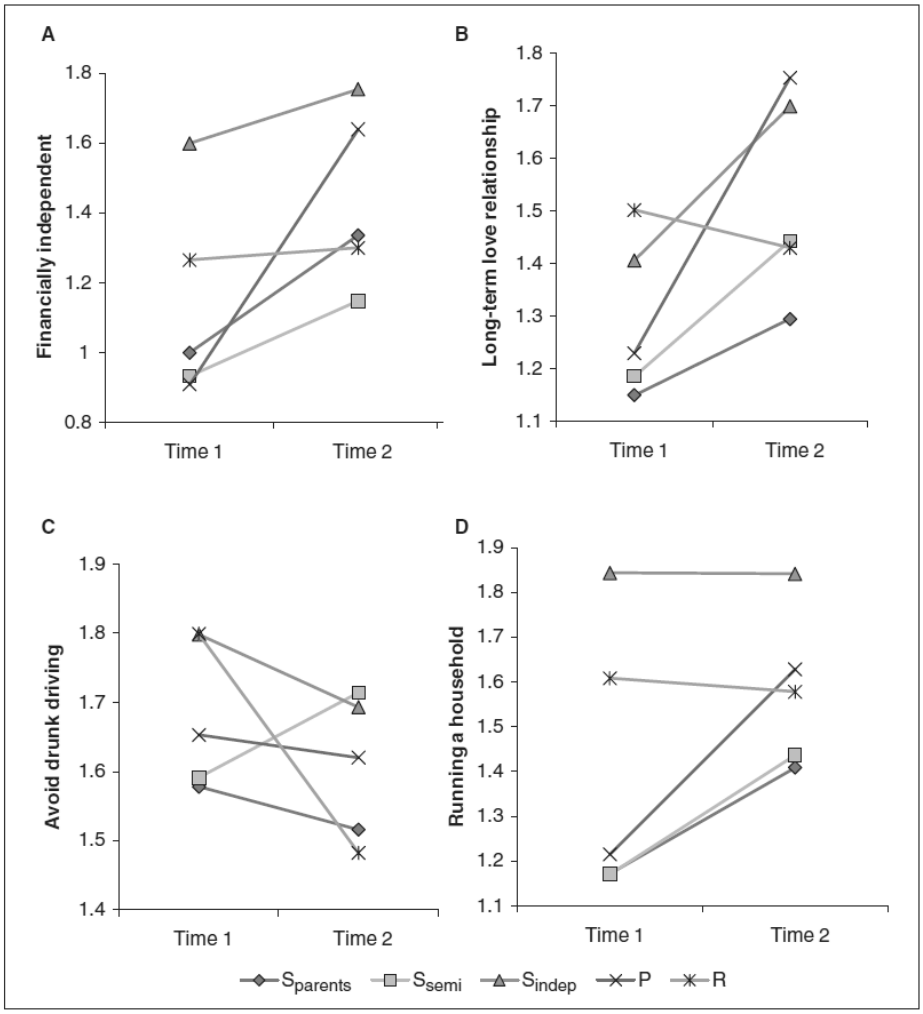

Figure 1. Estimated marginal means of the following criteria for adulthood: Financially independent from parents (A), committed to a long-term love relationship (B), avoid drunk driving (C), and capable of running a household (D) across time for the five different categories reflecting change/stability in living situation over time (Stable with parents, $S_{parents}$; Stable semi-independent, S_{semi}; Stable independent, S_{indep}; Progression, P; and Regression, R).

Achievement of Adult Criteria and Subjective Well-Being

In the last set of analyses, we investigated whether change in the achievement of criteria for adulthood over time results in improving subjective well-being and whether there are particular criteria responsible for this. Initially, correlational analyses were conducted to explore how achievement of the various criteria of adulthood both at Time 1 and Time 2 relates to subjective well-being measured both at Time 1 and Time 2. Results revealed that the achievement of most criteria for adulthood was positively related with well-being. For reasons of conciseness, not all significant correlations are reported. The highest significant correlations with subjective well-being were found for the achievement of criteria reflecting independence (i.e., establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult, being financially independent from parents, and not deeply tied to parents emotionally), interdependence (i.e., committed to a long-term love relationship, and learn to always have good control of emotions), and family capacities (i.e., capable of supporting a family financially). To further investigate the relationship between change in achieving adulthood and change in well-being, we performed hierarchical linear regression analyses with subjective well-being measured at Time 2 as the dependent variable. To control for subjective well-being experienced at Time 1 and for achievement of the criteria for adulthood at Time 1, these variables were entered in Step 1. Achievement of the criteria of adulthood reported at Time 2 were entered in Step 2 as predictors. As such, we predicted relative changes in subjective well-being as a consequence of changes in achievement of criteria for adulthood. Again, separate analyses were run for the criteria organized by different subscales.

In each of the models tested, subjective well-being reported at Time 1 was the most important predictor of well-being at Time 2 ($\beta = .68$ on average, $p < .001$). Achievement of criteria of adulthood at Time 1 did not contribute significantly to changes in subjective well-being at Time 2, expect for one of the norm-compliance criteria, that is, avoid using illegal drugs ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). Adding achievement of the criteria of adulthood at Time 2 as new predictors to the model significantly improved the predictive power of the model, and this for

all models tested (ΔR^2 = .03 to .05, $p < .05$). For the criteria reflecting independence, results showed that achieving financial independence from parents ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$) positively predicted changes in well-being. With respect to interdependence, making lifelong commitments to others ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$) and having good control over emotions ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$) predicted positive changes in well-being. Furthermore, the only role transition that contributed significantly to subjective well-being seemed to be settling into a long-term career ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$). As for norm compliance, avoiding the use of illegal drugs at Time 2 ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) again positively predicted subjective well-being. Surprisingly, achievement of sexual monogamy (i.e., having no more than one sexual partner; $\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$) was the one criterion of adulthood that negatively predicted well-being. Finally, of the family capacities subscale, being capable of supporting a family financially ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$) positively predicted change in emerging adults' level of well-being.

Discussion

The present study focused on emerging adults' developmental pathway towards an adult status. We examined whether delayed home leaving affects the achievement of adulthood. Furthermore, the impact of achieving adult criteria on the amount of well-being during emerging adulthood was studied.

Emerging Adults' Transition to Adulthood

In accordance with Arnett (2001), results clearly show that adulthood is multidimensional, with emerging adults feeling that they have achieved adulthood by some criteria but not by others. Whereas the majority of emerging adults have achieved physical maturity and compliance to social norms, other dimensions of adulthood stay behind. For instance, although emerging adults gain more independence from parents, they are still highly preoccupied with redefining the hierarchical parent-child relationship into a relationship between equal adults. Furthermore, most emerging adults are involved in work-related role transitions, whereas the achievement of family-oriented role transitions

(marriage and childbearing) stay behind. According to Arnett (2004), emerging adults are highly self-focused; therefore, it is not surprising that they are mostly struggling with criteria that reflect commitment to others and family capacities. Nevertheless, over time emerging adults particularly evolve in this area, as they establish more stable partner relationships. As emerging adults grow older they also increasingly settle themselves into a long-term career and comply more with social norms. However, emerging adults in our sample became less successful in the avoidance of drunk driving. It is feasible that as young people gain driving experience they become more confident about their driving skills even when they had a few drinks. Maybe don't-drink-and-drive campaigns should also address to older target groups, instead of focusing mainly on young people who recently obtained their drivers' license.

Adulthood and Emerging Adults' Living Situations

Findings revealed that the achievement of some adult criteria is related to emerging adults' type of living situation. Similar to previous studies, it was found that emerging adults in Belgium can be roughly categorized as co-residing with parents, living semi-independent, and living fully independent (de Jong Gierveld et al., 2001; Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986; Mayseless, 2004). Contrary to our expectations, achievement of various dimensions of adulthood appeared to be connected with emerging adults' residential status and not solely the achievement of individualistic qualities. In line with the ideas of SIT (Blos, 1967, 1979), results consistently showed that independently living emerging adults succeed best in achieving the adult status. Thus, we can confirm that independently living emerging adults are not only successful in transforming the hierarchical parent-child relationship toward a relationship of mutual support (Aquilino, 1997; Dubas & Petersen, 1996; Flanagan et al., 1993) but are also more financially independent, make lifelong commitments to others more often, and have achieved role transitions and family capacities more frequently than their peers in less independent living situations. Emerging adults who co-reside with their parents are, by contrast, poorest at achieving an adult status with the exception of

finishing off education and full-time employment. Emerging adults who live semi-independently have achieved these criteria that reflect the transition from school to work life the least because the group comprises the highest number of college students.

Apart from examining contemporaneous associations between living situation and achievement of adult criteria, we also examined associations between changes in both constructs. Young people who moved towards a more independent type of living situation made most progress concerning their financial status, relationship status, and perceived skills to run a household. Emerging adults who continue to live independently, will have achieved most of these criteria already and thus they do not make that much progress anymore over time. The emerging adults who permanently live with their parents or semi-independent made progress too, over time; however, they still scored lowest on the achievement of these adult criteria. Surprisingly, moving back to a less independent living situation did not completely undo the criteria that are achieved during the period of independent living. It seems that these emerging adults preserve what they have attained before; therefore, they are different from their peers who have never left the parental home, keeping intact their achievement of adult criteria. In sum, it can be concluded that leaving to a more independent residential status is important for emerging adults' pathway to adulthood, even if one would return to the parental home afterwards, as it is associated with growth in particular criteria, for adulthood.

As mentioned before, avoiding drunk driving is the one criterion that acts like an outsider, as no growth but decline is recorded. For this criterion, it does not hold true that once it is achieved, it is preserved. For young people moving back to the home of parents, this decline is sharpest and brings them close to emerging adults continuously residing with parents. It is not entirely clear why young people who live with their parents, either after a period of independent living or otherwise, engage more in this type of reckless behavior. Surprisingly, the semi-independent participants are the only ones who improve in avoiding drunk driving. Together with their stable independent living peers, they seem to

be most responsible. Emerging adults who progressed to a more independent residential status scored somewhat in between and deteriorated least on this criterion. Hence, although most emerging adults seem to become less careful about drunk driving, again those living with their parents, but also those moving back into the parental household seem to take on the least adult responsibilities.

Adulthood and Subjective Well-Being

In line with earlier research (Galambos et al., 2006; Galambos & Krahn, 2008; Schulenberg et al., 2004), it was found that the achievement of criteria for adulthood is related to more subjective well-being. Hence, even though Western cultures are highly focused on youthfulness (Fry, 1996), achieving adult maturity is associated with experiences of higher well-being. Except for avoiding the use of illegal drugs, no criterion achieved at an earlier time was predictive of change in the amount of well-being. Instead, change made in the achievement of adult criteria in 1 year did predict improvement in emerging adults' well-being. Particularly growth in criteria reflecting independence and interdependence leads to more well-being. That is, when emerging adults become more financially independent from their parents and when they grow in making lifelong commitments to others and having good control over their emotions, they experience improvement in well-being. But also the more emerging adults succeed in settling themselves into a long-term career, avoid the use of illegal drugs, and are capable of supporting a family financially, the more well-being they experience. For only one criterion, growth to a more adult status predicted declining well-being: having no more than one sexual partner. Because emerging adults are in the process of becoming less self-oriented, in order to commit themselves to enduring relationships with others (Arnett, 2004), this specific restriction is possibly quite a heavy burden for them.

Strengths and Limitations

This study clearly confirmed that adulthood is a multifaceted construct. Therefore, if we want to fully capture the multidimensional character of the

adults status, future research should no longer ask respondents whether they have reached adulthood in general but tap into each of the dimensions separately. Arnett's scale containing various adult criteria can be used for this purpose. However, a thorough study on the improvement of the internal factor structure of this scale is needed first, before we will be able to work with scale scores for the separate dimensions of adulthood. Moreover, when studying emerging adults' transition to adulthood, their living situation should always be taken into account, as findings suggest that one's residential status is related to the pace of the process toward adulthood.

Although this study revealed some interesting findings, the nonrepresentativeness of our sample queries the generalization of the results. Future cross-cultural research with representative samples is warranted before we can feel confident about generalizing our conclusions to all emerging adults. It would for instance be interesting to investigate whether late home leaving has the same implications in Southern European countries, where it is more common to live with your parents during emerging adulthood, compared with Northern European countries like Belgium. Nevertheless, the results of this study are of note because they reveal some new insights into the developmental process to adulthood. This is one of the first studies that considers emerging adults' achievement of an adult status for each of the dimensions of adulthood separately. Furthermore, this study pointed out the important role of emerging adults' living situation in the transition to adulthood. Delayed home leaving can be an unfavorable living situation for emerging adults, as results suggest that co-residing with parents in emerging adulthood is associated with a delay in the achievement of some important criteria for adulthood. These relationships not only became apparent in the cross-sectional part of our research but were also confirmed over time. However, future research that takes into account other relevant variables, such as quality of the parent-child relationship and reasons for the living situation, is needed to find out whether delayed home leaving is truly detrimental under all circumstances. Possibly, for emerging adults who live in an autonomy-supportive family, have good relationships with their parents, and who

fully support the choice for this type of living situation, co-residing with parents has less negative effects.

Another strength of this study is that, even after controlling for background variables with substantial effects on the achievement of adult criteria, a strong connection between living situation and achievement of adulthood and well-being was found. In line with these findings, future research should explore the robust effects of these control variables further. Especially partnership status (i.e., having a partner or not) is an underexplored variable that seems to be quite crucial for emerging adults' development to adulthood. Qualitative research could be useful to further investigate the role partnership plays in becoming an adult.

Conclusion

Emerging adults are making the transition to an adult status. However, the course of this developmental process seems to be connected to the living situation during this phase of life. Independent living appears to be associated with an accelerated attainment of certain criteria for adulthood, whereas continued coresidence with parents proved to stunt this process. Moreover, progress in the achievement of adult criteria is positively related to emerging adults' well-being. Therefore, developmental psychologists and clinicians would do well to pay attention to the potentially harmful implications delayed home leaving can have during this stage of life.

Chapter 3

"Why would I leave? It's easy and I don't have to pay for anything": A qualitative analysis of emerging adults' experiences to live with the parents or to reside independently[1]

In today's Western societies the transition to adulthood is prolonged, creating a separate developmental phase between adolescence and adulthood which is referred to as *emerging adulthood.* Following from this general delay in adult commitment-making, a considerable number of emerging adults continues to live in the parental household. The present study aimed to obtain a greater understanding of the home-leaving experience during the stage of emerging adulthood, by qualitatively exploring how young people who live with their parents and young people who have taken steps towards independent living experience their residential status. Twenty emerging adults, aged 24 to 25, were questioned through face-to-face open-ended interviews. Responses were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Emerging adults' descriptions suggest that the home-leaving process is a complex period in life characterized by feelings of ambivalence. Several themes were identified which illustrate how emerging adults are simultaneously trying to combine a strong need for independence from the parents with a wish to remain connected to the parents. Implications for clinical practice and future research are discussed.

[1]Kins, E., De Mol, J., & Beyers, W. (2011). "Why would I leave? It's easy and I don't have to pay for anything: A qualitative analysis of emerging adults' experiences to live with the parents or to reside independently. *Unpublished manuscript.*

Given that there is a general tendency in Western postindustrial societies to postpone the transition to adulthood, it is nowadays not uncommon to find people in their mid or late twenties living with their parents (Scabini & Cigoli, 1997). Since the 1980s, the average age at which young people leave the parental home and attain full residential independence has increased profoundly in most Western countries (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; Galland, 1997). Nevertheless, the achievement of an independent residential status is still considered an important step in the transition towards more mature functioning (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). For both parents and children leaving home is often viewed as a major statement when children are trying to redefine their roles as adults, even though the relationship between generations clearly does not end with the act of home leaving (Aquilino, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Hence, the transition to adulthood might be a different experience for young people who continue to live with their parents in comparison to those living away from parents. To gain a greater understanding of the home-leaving experience in the stage of emerging adulthood, the present study qualitatively explored how young people who either live with their parents or reside independently experience their residential status. In this respect, a specific focus of attention was given to the perception of the parent-child relationship in the different types of living arrangements. Second, we interviewed young people on their reasons to live with the parents or to reside independently. Finally, this qualitative approach allowed us to obtain more in-depth descriptions of emerging adults' experiences with the actual moment of leave-taking from the parental home.

The Home Leaving Process in Emerging Adulthood

Living with your parents throughout your twenties or even longer, has become a widespread demographic phenomenon in many Western countries (Cherlin, et al., 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994, 1999). This tendency seems to go hand in hand with the general delay in the transition to adulthood, characteristic for these societies. As young people seem to take on adult roles

(e.g., stable job, relationship, parenthood) later than they did in the past, the prolonged stage between adolescence and adulthood has become a separate phase in life. Therefore, this period from the late teens through twenties, with a specific focus on ages 18 to 25, has been demarcated as *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2000). One of the most central features that distinguishes emerging adulthood from adolescence and young adulthood is that this a time when people get the chance to explore various possibilities without having to make lifelong commitments. The increase in years devoted to pursuing higher education is considered one of the most important reasons for the delayed entry into adult roles (Arnett, 2004). That is, for most young people college seems to create a kind of prolonged psychosocial moratorium that allows for a continuation and intensification of the role experimentation that began earlier in adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Arnett, 2000). However, emerging adulthood is not simply an "extended adolescence" because it is much different from adolescence, with less parental control allowing for a more independent identity exploration (Arnett, 2004). It is particularly this sense of wide-open possibilities that makes emerging adulthood an exciting period with high hopes and big dreams.

The parent-child relationship. As an increasing number of young people continues to co-reside with the parents in most Western countries, it remains to be questioned whether this period of emerging adulthood is just as exciting for those living in the parental home than for those living away from parents. Daily parental monitoring might for instance curtail emerging adults' exploration of possibilities in the areas of love, work and worldviews. Emerging adults typically have a growing need for more independence and self-regulation, which challenges the parent-child relationship to evolve from a hierarchical relationship into a mutual relationship between two equal adults (Tanner, 2006). Parents' acknowledgement and acceptance of their offspring's emerging adult status forms a critical step in this maturation process (Aquilino, 2006). Difficulties in acknowledging the child's emerging adult status may however be particularly prevalent when children continue to co-reside with their parents. Research gave evidence for this idea, with young people living under the same

roof with their parents feeling still treated as children by their parents (Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993; White, 2002). In contrast, the act of home leaving itself may promote the transformation of the parent-child relationship towards more mutuality, as it creates more opportunities for the emerging adult to make decisions independently and to interact with parents in more satisfying ways (Aquilino, 1997; Arnett, 2004; Dubas & Petersen, 1996).

To sum up, there is some evidence that co-residing with parents versus living away from parents can have an impact on emerging adults' specific developmental needs. Emerging adult's home leaving has shown to be a major source of discontinuity and change for the parent-child relationship in particular. Despite the importance of the home-leaving process during this life stage, little is known on how emerging adults truly experience their living situation. Therefore, it was the main purpose of the present study to qualitatively explore the lived experiences of emerging adults who either live with their parents or who reside (fully) independently, with a particular interest on the experience of the parent-child relationship in the different living arrangements. It is likely that the experience of the living situation, including the relationship with the parents, will be influenced by the reasons emerging adults have to either live with their parents or to reside independently.

Reasons for Emerging Adults' Living Situation

Emerging adults can have diverse reasons for their residential status. Yet regarding delayed home leaving, financial reasons are cited as the key motives to explain why emerging adults continue to live with their parents or return to the parental household after a period of (semi-)independent living (Aassve, Billari, Mazzuco, & Ongaro, 2001; Cherlin et al., 1997; Clemens & Axelson, 1985; DaVanzo & Goldscheider, 1990). The lack of economic independence that logically follows from the longer time young people nowadays spent in higher education would inevitably contribute to postponement of certain role transitions, including the transition to residential independence (Settersten & Ray, 2010). It seems like young people are currently not capable to live independently anymore

due to low start wages, job instability, and the rising prices on the housing market, and thus have no other option than to live with their parents. This gives the impression that continued coresidence with parents during emerging adulthood is never volitional but instead a necessary evil for those who are not financially independent yet. From a contrasting point of view, it has been argued that today's coresidence is more likely to reflect a personal choice in comparison with the past, when young people traditionally were ought to live with their parents until they were married (Nave-Herz, 1997). Although different pathways to residential independence are nowadays socially accepted, the cost-benefit ratio of staying in the parental home could, at least for some emerging adults, be more favorable than other types of living situations. Given that families' living conditions have historically improved and also due to the lower number of children, the parental home might indeed have become a more attractive place to reside in. Furthermore, because the parenting climate has become more liberal, there hardly exists a generation conflict anymore between young people and their parents (Nave-Herz, 1997). Hence, most young people seem to have good and warm relationships with their parents, which in turn seem to contribute why some emerging adults are in no hurry to leave the parental home (de Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, & Beekink, 1991; Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007; Van Hekken, De Mey, & Schulze, 1997).

Leaving the parental home, on the other hand, has been frequently associated with the involvement in a romantic relationship. Until the 1970s, the most common reason to leave the parental home was getting married. Leaving home for other reasons than family formation was peculiar and socially unaccepted, especially for women (Arnett, 2004; de Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, & Dourleijn, 2001). However, in recent decades marriage is no longer required to leave the parental home. Consequently, it has become uncommon for most young people to remain at home until marriage. Nowadays, the transition to residential independence seems much more driven by individualistic purposes, with young people leaving home simply to be independent (Arnett, 2004; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Nevertheless, although home leaving has

been separated from marriage, it has been suggested that having a partner or not, continues to play a key role in an emerging adults' decision to leave the parental home or to continue to live with the parents. Data has for instance shown that being involved in a romantic relationship typically stimulates young people to leave the parental home (Eurostat, 2010; Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007; Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). Hence, even though marriage has lost popularity, unmarried cohabitation with a romantic partner is still one of the most recurrent types of living situations among emerging adults living away from the parents (Eurostat, 2010; Vettenburg, Elchardus, & Walgrave, 2007).

We thus have some notion about young people's reasons to continue to co-reside in the parental home or to move out, with findings mainly coming from sociological research. This research focused for the most part on the impact of sociodemographic variables (e.g., income of parents, family structure, and number of siblings) and has often yielded inconsistent results (e.g., Cooney & Mortimer, 1999; de Jong Gierveld, et al., 1991; White, 1994). Little is known about how young people themselves think about the reasons for their current living situation. Therefore, it was the second aim of this study to ask emerging adults in a face-to-face open-ended interview about their reasons to either continue to live with their parents or to decide to leave the parental home.

The Moment of Leaving-Taking from the Parental Home

In a time when the transition to adulthood is more gradual and ambiguous than ever before, the act of home leaving forms a critical step (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Yet, we have little information on how young people and their parents truly experience the actual moment of leave-taking from the parental home. Using qualitative methodology, the present study tried to obtain in-depth descriptions of how emerging adults have experienced the moment they left the parental home or—when they still lived with their parents—how they think they will experience this moment. It was also questioned how emerging adults think their parents have/will experience(d) the moment of leave-taking from the parental home.

Emerging adulthood is a time when many different future options remain open and little directions in life have been decided for certain. Therefore, it tends to be an age of great hopes and expectations, with most emerging adults feeling very optimistic about their future (Arnett, 2004). Given that a departure from the parental home creates a great opportunity for change, emerging adults might experience this event as exciting. Nevertheless, the downside of the various possibilities of emerging adulthood is that is can also be a time of anxiety and uncertainty because many young people are unsettled and have no idea to where these explorations will lead (Arnett, 2004). Dealing with these challenges while, at the same time, living away from parents might be quite difficult for young people. In this respect, leaving the parental home could also be experienced as an extremely stressful event for some emerging adults (Bloom 1987; Fisher & Hood, 1988). Similarly, some emerging adults might think that their parents will view the moment they leave the parental home as a positive transition and enjoy their augmented spare time and freedom (Clemens & Axelson, 1985; White & Edwards, 1990). Whereas others might think that their parents will dread the idea of an empty nest and thus feel rather pessimistic about the moment of leave-taking from the parental home (Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009).

The Present Study

Using qualitative methodology, the general purpose of the present study was to gain a greater understanding of the home-leaving process in emerging adulthood. We had three specific research aims. A first aim was to explore emerging adults' subjective experiences of living with the parents versus residing independently. In this respect, specific attention was paid to the parent-child relationship in the different types of living arrangements. A second aim was to explore the reasons emerging adults refer to, when asked to explain why they are living in their current living situation. A third and final aim was to obtain more in-depth descriptions of emerging adults' experiences with the actual moment of leave-taking from the parental home.

Method

Participants

The present study was conducted in Belgium, a Western-European country where the age of home leaving has typically been postponed in the last decades. Demographics in Flanders (i.e., the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), for instance, indicated that leaving home before the age of 22 is a rarely occurring phenomenon (i.e., about 5%). And although the percentage that lives independently increases with age, it is not until the age of 25 that half of the Flemish emerging adults are no longer living in the parental household (Vettenburg, et al., 2007). Therefore, it was decided to focus on young people in their early to mid-twenties in the current interview study. Furthermore, because we were interested in the experiences of emerging adults in the process of home leaving, we wanted our sample to comprise both young people who were still living permanently in the parental home as well as young people that have already taken steps towards independent living. Based on these two criteria (i.e., age and residential status), we selected a number of people from a larger questionnaire study. Potential candidates were contacted by phone by the first author and asked if they were willing to participate in the current qualitative study. Participants received two film vouchers for their voluntary participation.

A total of 20 emerging adults took part in this study (9 males, 11 females), representing a reasonably homogeneous sample of White emerging adults, aged 24 to 25, and coming from middle-class families. Five of them lived permanently in the parental home, 11 lived fully independently, and 4 lived in a semi-independent residential status. Contrary to those living fully independently, emerging adults in a semi-independent residential status live away from their parents but return to reside in the parental home on a frequent basis and do not yet take all responsibilities associated with independent living (e.g., laundry, paying bills). In our sample three of the semi-independently living emerging adults lived in a students' apartment but returned home during weekends. The other semi-independent emerging adult frequently stayed over in her boyfriends' home but returned to the parental home on average two or three nights a week.

In the overall sample, a total of six emerging adults came from nonintact families (i.e., parents divorced). Five of them were living currently fully independently and one lived semi-independently. All emerging adults living permanently in the parental household came from intact families (i.e., both parents still together). With respect to level of education, 13 participants had an advanced degree whereas seven terminated education after high school. The majority of the emerging adults were working (i.e., 17 full-time and 1 part-time employed). Two participants were still students at the time of data gathering and both of them were living in a semi-independent residential status (i.e., students' apartment). Fourteen emerging adults were involved in relationship with a romantic partner with whom they had been together with for less than a year up to 8 years. With the exception of one emerging adult who lived alone, all emerging adults that were living fully independently cohabited with a partner. For an overview of the background characteristics of each of participants see Table 1.

Procedure

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted during a home visit. Interviewees were asked about their subjective experiences with their living situation, the relationship with their parents, the reasons for their current living situation, and about the (anticipated) moment of leave-taking from the parental home. An interview schedule (see Appendix) was developed to guide the interviews. However, emerging adults were encouraged to talk about their personal whereabouts and were probed when important individual topics arose. Interviews were digitally recorded and lasted on average 40 to 45 minutes. Verbatim transcripts of the semi-structured interviews served as the raw data for this study.

The data were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 2004). IPA is a method for qualitative data analysis with theoretical underpinnings in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography. This approach is dedicated to the understanding of the phenomenological or subjective

Table 1

Background Characteristics of Each of the Participants

Gender	*Age*	*Residential Status*	*Family Structure*	*Level of Education*	*Professional status*	*Partner*	*Duration Relationship*
Male	25	With parents	Intact	High school	Full-time employed	Yes	5 years
Male	25	With parents	Intact	High school	Full-time employed	No	-
Male	24	With parents	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	1 year
Male	24	Semi-Independent	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	3 years
Male	24	Independent (partner)	Nonintact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	7 years
Male	24	Independent (partner)	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	2,5 years
Male	25	Independent (partner)	Nonintact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	8 years
Male	25	Independent (partner)	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	> 2 years
Male	25	Independent (alone)	Nonintact	High school	Full-time employed	No	-
Female	24	With parents	Intact	High school	Full-time employed	No	-
Female	24	With parents	Intact	High school	Full-time employed	No	-
Female	24	Semi-independent	Nonintact	Advanced	Student	No	-
Female	24	Semi-independent	Intact	Advanced	Student	No	
Female	24	Semi-independent	Intact	Advanced	Part-time employed	Yes	< 1 year
Female	24	Independent (partner)	Nonintact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	1 year
Female	24	Independent (partner)	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	6 years
Female	24	Independent (partner)	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	> 3 years
Female	24	Independent (partner)	Intact	Advanced	Full-time employed	Yes	> 3,5 years
Female	24	Independent (partner)	Nonintact	High school	Full-time employed	Yes	7 years
Female	25	Independent (partner)	Intact	High school	Full-time employed	Yes	> 1 year

experience of an individual. However, because we have no direct access to these individual experiences, the achievement of such understandings is believed to involve interpretative work or hermeneutics on part of the researcher. IPA offers a systematic framework to do this interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Instead of wanting to move quickly to more general claims, IPA typically handles each case with great detail as an entity on its own and prioritizes a rich idiographic account before looking at patterns or similarities across cases. Because of this commitment to the detailed examination of the particular case, IPA studies usually have a small number of participants. The aim is to find a reasonably homogeneous sample so that, within the sample, convergence and divergence can be examined (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). By focusing in more depth on the individual experiences of participants, IPA can serve as a valuable supplement to previous quantitative inquiry and bring new insights (Smith, 1996). This qualitative method is particularly suitable to study topics that are multidimensional, dynamic, contextual, and subjective, relatively novel and where issues relating to identity, the self and sense making are important (Smith, 2004). IPA has been used extensively in health psychology (for overview, see Brocki & Wearden, 2006), but it has also been picked up in the areas of social (e.g., Aresti, Eatough, & Brooks-Gordon, 2010; de Visser & Smith, 2007) and clinical psychology (e.g., McManus, Peerbhoy, Larkin, & Clark, 2010; Raval & Smith, 2003).

Verbatim transcripts of the semi-structured interviews with the emerging adults were analyzed using a step-by-step approach as described in detail in Smith and Osborn (2003). First, the transcript of each of interview was read a number of times in order to become as familiar as possible with the account. Following the ideographic approach of IPA, we began by looking into detail at the transcript of one interview before moving on to examine the others. While reading and re-reading the transcripts, initial comments to what the respondent said were annotated in the margin of the text. When returning to the beginning of the transcript, these initial notes were then translated into emergent themes at a higher level of abstraction. At this stage, it is important to find a balance between

finding themes that are high level enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases but that are still grounded in the particularity of what the respondent said. In a next step, these emergent themes were exported to a list in order to find connections between them. This rather analytical or theoretical ordering resulted in a clustering of themes for each of the cases, where subordinate themes with identifying information were nested within higher-order clusters. Typical for IPA, is that, the clustering of themes involves an iterative procedure where the researcher constantly returns to the transcript to check if the participant's phrases support the researcher's interpretation. This approach resulted in a final list of themes classified coherently as clusters with a superordinate or higher-order theme, with each of the relevant themes being allotted an identifier that provides a particularly good interview example of its respective theme.

This process was repeated for each case. However, the list of themes that emerged from a previous case was used to inform the analysis of the next interview transcript. By remaining aware of what had come before, we were able to discern repeating patterns but also to identify what was new and different in the subsequent transcripts. Where convergences were found in the data, existing themes could be further illuminated. Divergences by contrary lead to the occurrence of additional themes. Consonant with the iterative process of IPA, earlier transcripts were reviewed in the light of such new themes. Once each transcript had been analyzed by the interpretative process, a final list or master table of higher-order themes was constructed for the group. Such a list respects both patterns of convergence across cases, but also individual idiosyncrasy in how that convergence is manifest (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In a final step, the master table was translated into a narrative account where themes are explained in more detail and illustrated with verbatim extracts from the participants.

Given that our approach to qualitative inquiry is based on a phenomenological interpretative paradigm, the researcher's interpretative engagement is necessary to make sense of the verbal accounts being analyzed (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). However, as the researcher does not enter this

process as a tabula rasa, his/her interpretations are potentially biased by personal experiences and the own (theoretical) background. Researchers should aim to suspend or at least acknowledge their previous assumptions or understandings in order to be open to the research phenomenon as it appears. This process, which is referred to as "bracketing", is considered necessary to increase the trustworthiness of the research process (Smith, et al., 2009). Moreover, to enhance credibility of our findings, the technique of analyst triangulation was used whereby transcripts were analyzed by three different researchers (Patton, 1999). The first researcher, who analyzed the transcripts, is a female clinical psychologist and PhD student. She is just past the age of emerging adulthood and has left the parental home several years ago. However the event of home leaving is still fresh enough in her memory to empathize with the interviewees and to recognize a lot of the things they reported. The second researcher is a male clinical psychologist, family therapist, and assistant professor. As a family therapist he often works with families who experience various kinds of difficulties when emerging adult children are trying to make the transition to adulthood. The third researcher is male psychologist and professor in developmental psychology. He was not directly involved in the analyses of the verbatim transcripts using the step-by-step approach but contributed to the comprehension of the emerging themes at a rather theoretical level. Comparing the findings of two or more researchers who independently analyze the same qualitative data provides an important check on selective perception and blind interpretative bias (Patton, 1999).

Results

Emerging adults who co-resided with their parents and who were living (semi-)independently were encouraged to talk as widely as possible about how they experienced their living situation during an interview. The participants' accounts clustered around three superordinate themes: The parent-child relationship, reasons, and the home-leaving experience. Each of these clusters comprised several subordinate themes. Similar themes emerged across the

interviewees, irrespective of whether they still co-resided in the parental home or lived away from parents. At a more detailed level of analysis, the ambiguity or ambivalence among the various emerging themes explicated the complexity of the home-leaving process. As such, each of the themes that emerged within the three higher-order clusters could be placed within a framework of "ambivalence".

Parent-Child Relationship

All emerging adults were highly preoccupied with the transformation of the parent-child relation into a more adult-like relationship. The participants' reports clearly illustrated how they struggle to find a balance between closeness and distance. That is, on the one hand, emerging adults stressed their need for independence, and particularly independent choice making. However, at the same time there was also a great consideration for the relation with the parents. Although this relationship with the parents is different from childhood, most young people had difficulties to identify what had changed precisely or how this adult relationship should now look like.

Independence. Participants frequently reported a strong need for independence from parents. During this stage in life, young people want to stress their individuality by making their own decisions and by proving that they can manage things without their parents' help.

> "I'm not my parents, I am a different person." (male, age 24, lives independently).
> "(…) and I really had the idea: 'Now I can do it on my own'. Maybe I also wanted to prove myself somehow to my parents. Like, look I can do this by myself; you really don't need to worry." (female, age 24, lives semi-independently)

When participants co-resided in the parental home the need for more independence from parents was typically articulated as having enough privacy and freedom to decide things for yourself, especially about going out. Yet, most

emerging adults acknowledged that living with your parents also involves that you still have to show some consideration for their rules and wishes.

> "I'm well of here with my parents. … I'm free to do whatever I want. If I go out in the weekend until 6 am, that's no problem and nobody complains about it. So that's perfect actually." (male, age 25, lives with parents)
>
> "I can do what I want. Of course, you should show some consideration for the other people living at home. But other than that I have no restrictions." (male, age 25, lives with parents)
>
> "However you look at it [returning to the parental home], some form of social control is reinstalled. You're free to do what you want, but when you live together with people it's inevitable that they will ask you sometimes: 'Where are you going?', 'Where have you been?', and 'It was quite late last night'. So yes, there is some kind of social control that makes it sometimes less enjoyable." (female, age 24, lives semi-independently)

Participants that lived no longer permanently in the parental home, on the contrary, mainly emphasized how they were able to indulge their independence from parents in their own place of residence. Standing on their own two feet gave them the opportunity to gain more self-governance and most of them expressed that they would not want to give that up by moving back in with the parents.

> "I figured out all these things [cooking, laundry] by myself. I tried to take care of myself, and it seems to work out (laughs). I found it pleasant that way. I would really not like it if my mother would bring my food every day or do my laundry." (female, age 24, lives independently)
>
> "I believe I could not do that anymore, living with my parents. If you're used to doing your own thing…" (male, age 25, lives independently)
>
> "After being several years away from home, I didn't feel like moving back in with my parents. That would be a huge adaptation for me. I enjoy

the freedom I gained during college, and actually I don't want give that up." (female, age 24, lives semi-independently)

Enduring importance of parents. Notwithstanding the great value that is attached to becoming more and more independent from parents, the participants' accounts simultaneously demonstrated a great consideration for the relationship with the parents. The underscoring of the importance of an ongoing connection to the parents indicates that the bond with the parents clearly does not weaken when the child grows up or leaves the parental home.

"I could not miss them." (female, 24, lives independently)
"I think they [parents] will still be there for me, I'm quite sure of that." (male, age 24, lives semi-independently)

This need for closeness to the parents might in fact be interpreted very literally, because even though Belgium is a small country, a reasonable number of the interviewees mentioned that they did not want to live far from their parents.

"In any case, I'm not planning on moving very far from the neighborhood." (male, age 24, lives with parents)
"I would not live far way from this area, definitely not." (female, age 24, lives with parents)

The ongoing importance of the relationship with the parents also shows from the fact that respondents described that they actively ask for their parents' advice when they have to take important decisions. Moreover, it seems that some emerging adults not only want to hear their parents' opinion but also try to obtain their parents' approval and thus need some kind of blessing.

"All big decisions are run through with my parents once more, because they have more experience with such things. So I believe it's the smartest to ask for their advice." (male, age 25, lives with parents)

> "In general, my parents confirm a bit what I believe is reasonable too." (male, age 24, lives with parents)
>
> "I wouldn't say: 'Now I'm going to look for an apartment by myself'. As a matter of fact my mother wouldn't want that, because it's better to spend your money on other things." (female, age 24, lives with parents)

In search for a redefinition of the parent-child relationship. Although most young people acknowledged that the relationship with their parents has changed compared to childhood, they were quite vague about how this relation currently looks like or should look like. Most respondents were very brief about this new of relating to each other and could not describe the relationship in more detail.

> "It's different then before, when children listen to their parents, and parents are actually above you. Now, it's just different, you have to interact differently, make decisions differently… That can cause resentment sometimes." (male, age 24, lives semi-independently)
>
> "You're not that close anymore with each other … well no, you are in fact close with each other, but each has a bit of his own territory now." (female, age 24, lives independently)
>
> "To put it in my father's words: Before, he was the main stockholder, and now I am the main stockholder." (male, age 24, lives with parents)

Reasons

A wide variety of reasons were mentioned when emerging adults were asked to explain why they were currently living away from their parents or why they were residing in the parental home. There seems to be a dynamic interplay between all these reasons, as the pros and cons of each of the arguments are constantly weighed against each other. Accordingly, the home-leaving process puts an emerging adult in an ambivalent state, both when s/he decides to stay in the parental home or to leave. The occurrence of certain events or role transitions (e.g., finding a job) seemed to help some emerging adults to stop doubting about

their reasons to stay in the parental home or their reasons to leave. As such these events withdraw them—at least for a while—from their ambivalent state of mind with respect to the decision to leave, stay or return to the parental home.

Financial status. Participants frequently referred to their financial status to explain why they were currently living with their parents. Some said they had no other choice than to live with their parents because they were financially incapable to buy or to rent a place of their own. For others it was a well-reasoned decision, as they believed it was more lucrative to stay with their parents and to save their money.

> "Financially, I'm incapable to live on my own." (female, age 24, lives semi-independently)
> "I would like to save some money first. And then if I have saved enough, I would be like: 'There, now I'm going to look for a place of my own'." (female, age 24, lives with parents)

Social pressure. Even though some participants still lived with their parents, emerging adults acknowledged that they have reached the age to leave the parental home or think at least about taking that step somewhere in the near future, because it is socially unaccepted to live with your parents at a certain age. However, they were not explicit about what age was deemed as the ultimate age limit to co-reside with the parents.

> "At a sudden moment, I think everyone should take that step to leave the parental home." (male, age 25, lives with parents)
> "Returning to my parents house was definitely ok. But on the other hand, I was already thinking about moving out again. Because you don't want to continue to live with your parents, I guess." (female, age 24, lives semi-independently)
> "Of course, there is a desire to live on my own, now that I'm 25. You can't live in the parental home forever, you need to start your own life." (male, age 25, lives with parents)

Comfort. Many emerging adults described the parental home as a convenient place to stay in, which made it difficult for them to decide to leave. For some, the parental home very much resembled a hotel, where the cooking, laundry, and so fort gets done for them, sometimes even without any charges. Having all these domestic chores done for you, was considered as very easy and as a huge advantage of living with the parents. Participants that moved out responded that they felt somewhat overwhelmed now they had to face all these tasks by themselves.

> "My living situation is very comparable to a hotel actually. I have no charges, but my meals are prepared, my laundry gets down, everything gets cleaned and the only thing I have to do is letting my mum know if I already had a hot meal or not." (male, age 24, lives with parents)
> "I did think 'Oops'. I was used to do quite a lot of chores at home, helping and stuff. But now I had do everything completely by myself, always cooking and so, taking your own decisions and getting by on the money you have." (female, age 24, lives independently)
> "I don't want to leave, I'm pretty comfortable here. I have no problems with it, so why wouldn't I stay here?" (male, age 25 lives with parents)

Company. One of the most frequently discussed topics when questioning emerging adults about the reasons for their current residential status, was the importance of company. Participants reported to be afraid of loneliness. Living by themselves was considered out of the question or at least not a voluntary choice. If they had no romantic partner or a housemate, they rather stayed with their parents. Respondents were reluctant to trade the cosiness of the parental home for an empty house. Some emerging adults felt it was a pity that they had to miss all that now they no longer lived there.

> "I would never leave the house by myself. So, as long as there is no second person where I could live with, I don't think it is going to happen." (female, age 24, lives with parents)

> "If I wouldn't have had a relationship at the time, I probably would have stayed with my parents." (male, age 25, lives independently)
>
> "I come home and I'm alone. I can never complain about my day at work or talk to someone. I have to wait until the next day until I see living beings again. When I still lived home, it was fun. When I came home late from work for instance, my mum would have stayed up and than we would talk for a while." (male, age 25, lives independently)

Role transitions. From some of the interviews it became clear that events, including a kind of role transition, play an important role in the home-leaving decision. For instance, a number of participants found a job and become financially capable to leave the parental home. This transition to employment helped them make the decision to leave the parental home and put an end to their ambivalent state of mind where one simultaneously reflects on the pros and cons of both staying in the parental home and living independently. For some respondents, the end of a partner relationship was what made them decide that moving back to the parental home was the best option. However, it is very likely that these role transitions might, at least for some emerging adults, only temporarily resolve the ambivalence state with respect to the home-leaving process.

> "My boyfriend is a few years older than me and he already wanted us to live together when I was still studying. But that wasn't possible for me. I had to be sure I had an income first, absolutely… From the moment I worked, we started looking for a place of our own." (female, age 24, lives independently)
>
> "I decided to end our relationship, because that was never going to work out. And my first option was to return to my parents again. At the time that was the best." (female, age 24, lives with parents)

The Home-Leaving Experience

For the majority of the participants leaving the parental home was considered a gradual process. Some of the independently living participants could not even remember the exact moment of leave-taking from the parental home, as they slowly evolved from a rather semi-independent residential status to living fully independently. However, the transition to independent living does not necessarily follow a linear movement towards more independence. For instance, some emerging adults reported that they already reckon in the possibility that they might return to the parental home some time in the future.

> "It's likely that I will think 'Oh no' and move back to my parents." (female, age 24, lives with parents)
> "If things go wrong, I want my parents to be prepared so they can evaluate if and when I will be back at their door step." (male, age 24, lives with parents)

Most emerging adults described the moment of leave-taking from the parental home as a positive experience. Participants, that had already left the parental home, reflected on this event as something exciting they really looked forward to. Similarly, those who still co-resided with their parents were very optimistic and believed everything will work out just fine.

> "To me, it was not a farewell but instead 'Yippee, finally on my own two feet!' I was very happy that I could go and live on my own." (female, age 24, lives independently)
> "I think everything will work out just fine. If there will be problems I will deal with them at the time." (boy, age 24, lives with parents)

From the participants' perspective the moment of leave-taking from the parental home is also for the parents an experience that is associated with positive feelings. Whereas some emphasized the practical advantages of having one family member less in the house, others underscored the feelings of pride parents encounter when their child leaves the nest.

> "For my parents it will be a bit more peace and quiet and a bit less cleaning up, I guess." (male, age, 24, lives with parents)
> "My parents are happy that we are settled, and that we are doing so well." (female, age 24, lives independently)

Despite these positive feelings, participants commented that the home-leaving experience is at the same time also a stressful event both for themselves and their parents. For instance, a considerable number of the emerging adults expressed their worries about their capacities to manage all responsibilities that come with (full) independent living during the interview. Some were even quite emotional when they came to realize that they were (or would be) on their own and (had to) miss(ed) their parents.

> "I like to live here and I manage financially. That's of course always thrilling when you leave the parental home…if that will work out." (female, age 24, lives independently)
> "I think that it will be a lot harder. Going out shopping, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, those are all things I don't have to worry about now." (male, age 25, lives with parents)
> "I think that for me, it will be emotional. Because you've always lived there, it's a place where you had your childhood and everything. You have all those memories over there, so yes, it won't be easy for me." (female, age 24, lives semi-independently)
> "I found it difficult. I really looked forward to leave, but ehm…yeah, I really missed them in the beginning." (female, age 24, lives independently)

A lot of the participants believed that especially for the parents their leave-taking from the parental home was or will be a harsh experience. Their descriptions resembled the empty-nest-syndrome where parents feel sad and lonely because one or more children leave home.

"There were a lot of tears… But of course I'm the youngest and I was the last one to leave. All of a sudden my parents realized that they were all by themselves now." (female, age 24, lives independently)

"I can already picture it: My father going to work and my mother quietly crying at home." (male, age 24, lives semi-independently)

Discussion

In today's postindustrial Westerns societies the transition from adolescence to adulthood is prolonged, creating a separate developmental phase that is referred to as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is a fascinating stage in human life span during which parent regulation is gradually replaced with self-regulation and young people learn to stand on their own (Tanner, 2006). Leaving the parental home forms a part of this process towards more independence. However, since a few decades there is a demographic tendency for young people to live increasingly longer with the parents (Cherlin et al., 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). The present study investigated how emerging adults who co-reside with their parents and emerging adults who have taken steps towards independent living subjectively experience their residential status. In face-to-face open-ended interviews, emerging adults were asked to talk about the relationship with their parents, their reasons to co-reside with the parents or to live away from them, and the moment of leave-taking from the parental home. Emerging adults' descriptions suggest that the home-leaving process is in general a complex period characterized by feelings of ambivalence. Major themes, relating to the parent-child relationship, the reasons for the residential status and the home-leaving experience, all reflect this ambivalent state emerging adults find themselves in.

For instance, it was striking that when emerging adults talked about the relationship with their parents, they simultaneously emphasized their developmental need for more independence from the parents as well as the great importance they still attach to their parents' opinion and approval. Even though asking for parents' consent while yearning for individuality sounds rather

paradoxically, these findings are in fact consonant with the basic principles of separation-individuation theory (SIT, Mahler, 1963; Blos, 1979). According to the SIT, the child needs to establish a sense of self, separate from other primary love objects (i.e., separation) and obtain it's own individual characteristics or unique individuality (i.e., individuation) in order to maintain a reliable sense of individual identity in adulthood (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). Ideally this individuated self is established within the context of an ongoing connectedness to the parents (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Hence, separation-individuation does not imply complete detachment from parents, but instead refers to a complex dialectic between establishing an individuated sense of self while remaining connected to the family of origin (Baltes & Silverberg, 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989). Nevertheless, because the separation-individuation process involves a major redefinition of the self, the relationship with the caregivers will need to be redefined as well. When children make the transition to adulthood, the parent-child relationship is indeed confronted with a unique challenge whereby an adult relationship is negotiated in which children are afforded the freedom to make choices and decisions based on their own beliefs and values (Aquilino, 1997, Tanner, 2006). Although developmental theorists have typically situated this redefinition of the parent-child relationship in adolescence, it has been argued that the formation of a mutual adult-like relationship nowadays continues beyond adolescence into emerging adulthood (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Mattanah, Brand, & Hancock, 2004; Tanner, 2006). Our findings contributed to this body of research, as most emerging adults in the process of home leaving were highly preoccupied with the transformation of the hierarchical parent-child relationship of childhood as a means to resolve their feelings of ambivalence caused by their concurrent need for independence and wish to remain connected to the parents. However, contrary to expectations, emerging adults who co-resided with their parents did not express more difficulties with the transformation of the parent-child relationship towards more mutuality. Irrespective of their residential status, all emerging adults were trying to find out how their relationship with the parents should currently look like.

What stroke most were their vague descriptions about this relationship, suggesting that emerging adults have little guidelines on how to interact with their parents during this stage in life. Although emerging adults in the process of home leaving could reflect on their strong need for independence and on the enduring importance of parents separately, they seem to struggle to integrate both needs and find an optimal balance between independence and relatedness.

This feeling of ambivalence concerning issues of independence versus connectedness can be extended to the other cluster-themes as well. For example, when emerging adults talked about their reasons to stay in the parental home or to live away from the parents, the paradox between the importance of being independent on the one hand and the wish for relatedness on the other hand emerged again. Irrespective of their residential status, emerging adults were aware that they have reached an age they should start thinking about leaving the parental home and that in order to leave they need to be sufficiently financially independent from the parents. However, there was also some sadness when they realized that living on their own implies missing the comfort of the parental home and having to do everything by yourself. Their worrying about being alone and fear of loneliness, gave cause to a general consensus among the emerging adults that leaving the parental home should under no circumstances be unaccompanied. In line with findings from previous research, being involved in a romantic relationship thus still seems to play a convincing role in the decision to leave the parental home, even though having a partner is nowadays no longer a necessary precondition to move out (Lanz, & Tagliabue, 2007; Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). Being involved in a partner relationship but also other role transitions, like finding a job that allows for financial independence from parents, may temporary put an end to emerging adults' ambivalent state when considering reasons to leave, stay or move back to the parents. However, from emerging adults' descriptions it can be concluded that this ambivalence seems to return shortly after they have made a decision concerning their residential status. For example, even when young people decided it was smartest to move back to the parental home or to continue to co-reside with the parents because they wanted to save

more money or because they were involved in a relationship breakup, topics concerning their privacy and freedom often raised again. These unresolved issues with independence and relatedness assume that emerging adults in the process of home leaving have not yet come to terms with the process of separation-individuation.

Similar feelings of ambivalence emerged when emerging adults described their actual or anticipated home-leaving experience, reflecting the complex dialectical interplay between independence and relatedness characteristic of the separation-individuation process. One the one hand they truly enjoy their newly gained freedom and believe everything will work out just fine. These feelings of mastery and optimism are typical for emerging adulthood, a time when possibilities are endless and young people have the world at their feet (Arnett, 2004). However, despite the excitement, emerging adults also worry if they will be able to manage things both practically and emotionally without the parents. Parents too are expected to have ambivalent feelings with respect to the home-leaving experience of their child. Feelings of pride and relief were believed to alternate with feelings of sadness and loss when confronted with the empty nest. These in-depth descriptions of the actual moment of leave-taking from the parental home, suggest that the home-leaving experience is difficult both for emerging adults and parents, bringing issues of separation and individuation strongly to the fore.

In sum, all identified themes could be placed within a larger framework of ambivalence reflecting an inner conflict between the need for independence and a wish for relatedness. Such a complex dialectical interaction between independence and relatedness is characteristic for the developmental process of separation-individuation when children gradually reduce dependence from parents while trying to maintain connected to them (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). In line with previous research, our findings suggest that issues of separation-individuation are likely to become prominent again in the parent-child relationship when emerging adults are in the process of home leaving (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley,

1990). Given that the separation-individuation process is typically not resolved until the child succeeds at finding an optimal balance between closeness and distance (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Youniss & Smollar, 1989), it seems like emerging adults are still trying to reconcile oneself with this developmental process. The relationship with the parents remains very important, but is not yet transformed into a truly adult-like mutual relationship. The period of home leaving gives the impression of a kind of vacuum where emerging adults are doubtful about how they should connect to the parents. Reports of emerging adults who co-reside in the parental home and who live away illustrate that both are in search for what is possible and what is no longer appropriate. Overall, it turns out that, even though emerging adulthood is an exciting period, young people struggle with feelings of ambivalence and uncertainty and tend to have little guidelines to deal with the challenges of this stage in life. Clinicians working with emerging adults and their families would do well to help emerging adults and their parents to find new and adaptive ways to relate to one another. After all, parents may have a lot of questions too now that the changing nature of the transition to adulthood in Western societies may be extending the length of time parents have to engage in "parenting activities" (Aquilino, 2006; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study revealed a greater understanding of the home leaving process in emerging adulthood, some limitations are worthy of discussion. First, our findings were exclusively based on a sample of twenty 24- to 25-year-old, White emerging adults coming from middle-class families. Such a relatively homogeneous sample is required for the purpose of IPA, which rather aims at gathering rich ideographic accounts instead of making general claims (Smith et al., 2009). Hence, limited generalisability is intrinsic to this method of qualitative data analysis. As a result it remains to be examined whether our findings can be generalized to a broader sample of emerging adults in the home-leaving process.

Furthermore, we focused exclusive on a sample of Belgian emerging adults. Belgium is small country and it is likely that the home-leaving experience may be totally different compared to larger countries. Because everybody lives relatively close to one another, leaving the parental home may be a less radical change for Belgian emerging adults than for young people living in countries like the United States or Canada. It is for instance typical in Belgium that when children move out for college, they return back home for the weekend. Moreover, even when emerging adults have left home to live fully independently, they still live quite close to the parental home making it possible to meet up frequently with the parents. Future research in countries where independent living implies a substantial demographical distance from the parental home is needed before we can conclude that the home-leaving process is an ambivalent and uncertain period for emerging adults. It is for instance possible that when emerging adults live further away from the parents, fewer troubles are experienced with finding an optimal balance between closeness and distance to the parents.

Finally, we constructed an interview schedule that could be followed when emerging adults co-resided in the parental home as well as when they lived semi or fully independently, by making some small adjustments to the questions. Our interview questions were aimed at enlarging the differences on the various topics between the emerging adults who lived with the parents and those who lived away. However, contrary to our expectations emerging adults drew a similar picture irrespective of whether they lived with the parents or not. Perhaps future research with emerging adults in the process of home leaving should focus less on between-group differences regarding the residential status. Possibly other factors that have been shed insufficient light on in the context of home leaving, like having a partner or not and the quality of motivation an emerging adult has for his or her residential status as conceptualized within self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), may elucidate more pronounced differences between emerging adults than their living situation per se.

Conclusion

This present study showed a clearer picture of the home-leaving process in emerging adulthood. We identified several themes that reveal the ambivalent character of this stage in life. Whereas emerging adults have a strong need for independence, requiring a shift from parent-regulation to self-regulation, their relationship with the parents remains extremely important. Nevertheless, emerging adults seem to encounter difficulties to transform the former hierarchical parent-child relationship into a mutual adult-like relationship. The formation of such an adult relationship, where an optimal balance between closeness and distance is warranted, constitutes the outcome of the developmental process of separation and individuation. Clinicians could help emerging adults and their parents to find more adaptive ways to relate to one another by learning them how they can be there for each other while at the same time allowing each other the independence they want and need. Future research should further focus on the ambivalent state when emerging adults are in the process of home leaving and on the process of separation-individuation in particular.

Appendix

Interview schedule

1. Could you, to begin with, describe me your current residential status?
   - What is the type of residence? Who are your housemates?
     If the emerging adults resides independently: How far away do live from your parents? How often do you visit your parents? Does it happen that you stay over in your parents' house? Do you still have your own room in the parental home?
   - Are you satisfied with your current living condition or would you like to change something about it?
   - Has your residential status recently changed? If yes, where did you live before?
2. Why are you currently living here?
   - Have you actively reflected upon your residential status? Was it an intentional choice to live here?
   - What are the most important reasons why you are currently living here?
   - Do you fully endorse your choice to live here because of these reasons? Or does it by contrary feel sometimes like an obligation to live here because of these reasons?
3. Could you tell me something about the relationship with your parents?
   - *If the emerging adult resides in the parental home*: How is it to live under the same roof with your parents at this age?
   - Do you see each other often? Are you often doing things together? Is it enjoyable to spend time together?
   - To what extent do you still discuss things with your parents and ask for their advice?
   - Do you experience conflicts in the relationship with your parents? What are these conflicts about? How often do they occur?
   - Is the relationship with your mother different from the relationship with your father? In what way?
4. Could you tell me something about the (anticipated) moment of leave-taking from the parental home?
   - *If the emerging adult resides in the parental home*: Do you intend to leave home in the next year? For what reason(s) would you consider leaving the parental home? How do you think the moment of leave-taking from the parental home will occur? How will you experience this moment and how will your parents experience it?
   - *If the emerging adult resides independently*: How did you experience the moment of leave-taking from the parental home? How do you think your parents experienced this moment?

Chapter 4

Patterns of home leaving and subjective well-being in emerging adulthood: The role of motivational processes and parental autonomy support[1]

In Western postindustrial societies, the timing of home leaving is increasingly delayed. The diversity of home-leaving patterns, resulting from this evolution, has not yet been systematically studied from a psychological perspective. In this study, the authors aimed to examine how emerging adults' living arrangements—and the motives underlying those arrangements, as conceptualized in self-determination theory—relate to subjective well-being. A Belgian sample of 224 emerging adults and their parents completed self-report questionnaires. Analyses that used structural equation modeling showed that autonomous motivation for one's living arrangement is more strongly related to emerging adults' well-being than the living arrangement per se. Further, autonomy-supportive parenting was found to relate positively to an autonomously regulated residential status. Implications for the meaning and development of autonomy during emerging adulthood are discussed.

[1]Kins, E., Beyers, W., Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2009). Patterns of home leaving and subjective well-being: The role of motivational processes and parental autonomy support. *Developmental Psychology, 45,* 1416-1429.

Since the 1980s, the average age at which emerging adults leave their parents' home has increased, which is a logical consequence of the overall prolongation of the transition to adulthood in postindustrial societies (Scabini & Cigoli, 1997). This trend has been investigated mainly from a sociological perspective, whereas the psychological consequences of delayed home leaving—and the resultant variety of living arrangements—have been studied less extensively. The first goal of this study was to examine differences in emerging adults' living arrangements and to examine whether emerging adults' well-being differs according to their living arrangement. Second, on the basis of self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), we proposed that the quality of motivation undergirding a particular living situation is important in predicting satisfaction with one's living situation and subjective well-being. Finally, we examined whether autonomy-supportive parenting predicts emerging adults' motives for their living situation. In the sections that follow, we first discuss the diversity of home-leaving patterns and living arrangements that exist during emerging adulthood, and we review research on living arrangements and psychological well-being. Second, we provide a motivational analysis of emerging adults' residential status from the perspective of SDT. Third, we discuss how the quality of parenting style relates to emerging adults' motivational regulation for their living arrangement.

Emerging Adulthood and Delayed Home Leaving

In current Western societies, the transition to adulthood has become increasingly prolonged, compared with several decades ago (Blatterer, 2007). Because these societies require higher levels of education to get access to well-paid jobs, traditional markers of adult role achievement, such as marriage and childbearing, are often postponed (Arnett, 1998, 2001). For instance, in Belgium—a Western European country where this study was conducted—the mean age of first marriage for women and men rose from 26 years to 28.3 years and from 28.2 years to 30.8 years, respectively, between 1996 and 2005. The age of women having their first child increased to 28 years in 1999 (National Institute

for Statistics [NIS], 2008). The fact that 42% of Belgians between the ages of 18 and 25 years are students (the majority of whom are enrolled in higher education; Vettenburg, Elchardus, & Walgrave, 2007) is considered one of the main factors for postponement of role transitions. Arnett (1998) argued that the transition to adulthood is typically not completed until the mid- or late-twenties. Therefore, he introduced *emerging adulthood* as a new concept to denote the developmental period between adolescence and adulthood, during which young people feel neither an adolescent nor yet an adult. This period of feeling "in between", which typically spans the ages from 18 to 25 years, is characterized by frequent change and exploration of different life directions without commitments to adult roles.

Although emerging adults share some common features, there is much diversity among them as well, which is a logical consequence of the exploratory nature of this stage of human development (Arnett, 2000, 2004). The diversity and unpredictability of emerging adulthood is particularly reflected in the demographic area of residence (Arnett, 2000). Some emerging adults remain in the parental home, whereas others have already taken steps toward residential independence and are living either alone or together with a partner or a friend (Vettenburg et al., 2007). In addition, a substantial number of 18–25 year olds find themselves in an intermediate living arrangement between co-residing with parents and full residential independence, a status that is referred to as semiautonomy (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986). Semiautonomy involves living away from the parents without taking the full responsibility of independent living, a living situation particularly common among emerging adults who go off to college after high school (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994). As another illustration of the diversity in emerging adults' pathways to independent living, Seiffge-Krenke (2006) found that, besides young people who leave the parental home on time (mean age of 21 years for women and 23 for men in Germany), a substantial number leave the nest later, still reside with their parents, or return to the parental home at the age of 21–25 years. In addition to diversity, instability is another remarkable feature of the residential status of emerging adults (Arnett, 2000, 2004). According to Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1994), for instance,

up to 40% of emerging adults move back into the parental home at least once and then out again.

Although diversity and instability mark the residential status of emerging adults, since the 1980s there is a demographic tendency for young adults in Western countries to continue to live with their parents or to return to the parental home after a short period of living independently (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; White, 2002). For instance, a large-scale study of Belgian youths revealed that only 5% of young adults leave the parental home before 22 years of age. By 25 years of age, 69% of male and 33% of female young adults are still living at home (Vettenburg et al., 2007). This trend of delayed home leaving seems even more pronounced in Southern European countries (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; Cordón, 1997). An important question that emerged in research on young adults' living situations is why so many young people continue to co-reside with their parents, whereas current society accepts fully the exploration of a broad range of nonfamily living arrangements. To date, this question has been investigated mainly from a sociological perspective. Specifically, sociodemographic factors—such as financial status of the emerging adult, socioeconomic status of the family, family structure, and number of family members—have been examined as potential determinants of the tendency to co-reside with parents (de Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, & Beekink, 1991; Settersten, 1998). However, findings concerning the impact of those sociodemographic determinants on the timing of home leaving have been mixed and inconsistent. Comparatively less research on delayed home leaving has been conducted from a psychological perspective. As a result, the psychological outcomes associated with emerging adults' living arrangement have remained largely unexplored. This paucity of research may be due partly to the difficulty in conceptualizing the diversity of living arrangements among emerging adults (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Studies on home leaving have been particularly inconsistent in their treatment of the semiautonomous status and in their definition of what it means to "leave home" (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986). In this study, we administered a comprehensive set of questions relating to young adults' living

arrangements, allowing us, through the statistical technique of latent class analysis, to draw a more nuanced picture of participants' living situations.

Further, we aimed to examine differences between participants' empirically derived living arrangements and their subjective wellbeing. The lack of systematic research on living arrangements and emerging adults' subjective well-being is surprising because it can be argued, on the basis of some developmental theories, that achievement of an independent residential status signals mature development and, thus, may contribute to psychosocial adjustment. According to separation-individuation theory (SIT; Blos, 1979), late adolescents face the developmental task of loosening ties with parents and taking an independent stance. On the basis of SIT, one might argue that living with parents during emerging adulthood signals a lack of independence and mature, adult-like functioning. Moreover, renegotiation of the relationship with parents into a nonhierarchical adult relationship is considered a key outcome of the separation–individuation process (Levy-Warren, 1999), a process that could be hampered when one still resides in the parents' house (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2007; Dubas & Petersen, 1996). Consequently, emerging adults still living with parents would be more likely to fail to develop a mature adult-to-adult relationship, which might engender an increased risk for maladjustment (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Beyers & Goossens, 2003; Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2007).

Consistent with the ideas derived from SIT, studies have shown that young people who live independently view themselves as more adult-like than their peers who still co-reside with parents (Elm & Schwartz, 2006; White, 2002). Moreover, emerging adults who live independently tend to report better relationships with their parents than those who still live in the parental home (Buhl, 2007; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). A high-quality relationship with parents in turn has been shown to contribute to psychological well-being during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Bernier, Larose, & Whipple, 2005; Buhl, 2007; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005).

In contrast, some scholars have argued that prolonged coresidence is more likely to occur in families with positive parent-child relationships (Van Hekken, De Mey, & Schulze, 1997). Emerging adults with a good relationship with their parents would be more likely to experience a sense of well-being in the parental home and thus may be attracted to continued coresidence (Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007). Given that research to date has mainly yielded indirect evidence for an association between home leaving and well-being, and because of the existence of contrasting perspectives on the question of whether home leaving is related to subjective well-being, it seems important to examine this question further. Moreover, on the basis of SDT, we propose that individuals may have different motives for adopting a particular living arrangement and that these motives may be more important in predicting well-being than the living situation per se.

Motivational Dynamics Underlying Emerging Adults' Living Situation

Within SDT, the experience of autonomy, defined as the extent to which individuals behave according to self-endorsed and authentic values, is considered an essential ingredient of optimal human functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, the regulation of behavior can be situated along a continuum ranging from highly controlled to highly autonomous. At the extreme low end of this continuum, individuals' behavior is regulated by external forces (i.e., external regulation). Such actions are performed to meet externally pressuring demands or reward contingencies. Applied to the context of residential status, some emerging adults may feel pressured by external forces to either stay with their parents (e.g., because parents criticize their child for wanting to leave) or to leave the parental home (e.g., when parents' financial situation compels the child to leave home). Further along the continuum, individuals' behavior is regulated on the basis of introjection. With an introjected behavioral regulation, individuals perform particular actions to avoid feeling guilty or anxious, or to attain ego enhancements such as pride. For instance, young adults may stay with their parents because they would feel guilty about being disloyal to their family or,

conversely, may start to live on their own because they would be ashamed to still live with their parents at their age. Although introjected motives reside within the person, they are still experienced as conflicting and pressuring. As such, external regulation and introjection both represent instantiations of a controlled regulation of behavior and have often been combined in empirical research (e.g., Vansteenkiste, Lens, Dewitte, De Witte, & Deci, 2004).

Identification represents a more autonomous regulation, as it involves actions that are accepted as personally important, valuable, and meaningful. When individuals manage to align their identifications with their broader personal beliefs and values, they are said to function in an integrated manner—for instance, young adults who fully stand behind their decision to live with their parents or, conversely, who fully endorse their decision to live independently. Finally, at the highest level of self-determined functioning, intrinsic motivation is performed because one truly enjoys an activity and derives satisfaction from the behavior itself. Young adults may derive a sense of inherent enjoyment from either living with their parents or living independently. Because both identification and intrinsic motivation come with feelings of psychological freedom, they are often combined into an autonomous motivation score.

SDT assumes that the more behaviors are regulated by autonomous, rather than controlled, motives, the more individuals will flourish and experience subjective well-being. This hypothesis has been confirmed in numerous domains, including education, prosocial behavior, and parenting (for overviews, see Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Deci, 2008). The present study is the first to examine the role of autonomous and controlled motivation in the domain of residential status. On the basis of SDT, it is hypothesized that the motivational dynamics underlying emerging adults' living arrangement are related to their satisfaction with the living situation and their subsequent subjective well-being and may even be more strongly predictive of those outcomes than the living arrangement per se.

The Role of Parental Autonomy Support

Further, SDT makes clear predictions regarding parents' possible influence on their children's behavioral regulations. Specifically, autonomy-supportive versus controlling parenting is considered to be particularly important in fostering autonomous, rather than controlled, behavior regulation (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). Parental autonomy support is defined as characteristic of parents who take an empathic stance toward their child, allow for choice among options, and offer a rationale when possibilities are limited (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006). Conversely, controlling parents fail to take their children's perspective and pressure their children into compliance through intrusive and manipulative means (e.g., guilt induction and love withdrawal; Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Barber, 1996). Abundant research has confirmed that autonomy-supportive versus controlling parenting fosters autonomous motives and detracts from controlled motives for children's behavior (Ryan et al., 2006; Soenens et al., 2007). To date, however, the effect of parental autonomy support versus control has not yet been investigated in the residential area. We hypothesized that emerging adults who experience their parents as autonomy-supportive rather than controlling will endorse more autonomous and less controlled motives for their living situation and will subsequently experience more subjective wellbeing, irrespective of the actual living situation. We thus assumed that the effect of parental autonomy support versus control on emerging adults' satisfaction with their living situation and subjective well-being will be explained (i.e., mediated) by the quality of the motives underlying their living situation. Because we only tapped into the motives for one specific life domain (i.e., residential status), rather than into motivational dynamics behind individuals' general functioning, we expected that the relation between parental autonomy support versus control and subjective wellbeing would be partially (rather than fully) mediated by motives for residential status.

The Present Study

This study had four aims. First, using a balanced-sampling procedure, we aimed to provide a more nuanced picture of emerging adults' living arrangements, thereby trying to move beyond the mere distinction between young adults living with parents and those living away from parents. Second, we examined whether emerging adults' satisfaction with their living situation and their subsequent subjective well-being vary as a function of their living arrangement. On the basis of SIT and extant research, we expected young adults who still reside in the parental home to experience less satisfaction and well-being. Third, on the basis of SDT, we hypothesized that emerging adults' motives underlying their current living situation would be more strongly related to satisfaction and subjective well-being than the living situation per se. Specifically, autonomous motivation for one's living arrangement was expected to relate positively to well-being, whereas controlled motivation would relate negatively to well-being. Fourth, we hypothesized that parental autonomy support versus control would relate positively to autonomous motivation for residential behavior and negatively to controlled motivation. The relation between parental autonomy support versus control and emerging adults' subjective well-being would be at least partially mediated by the motives for residential status. Finally, we aimed to test these hypothesized associations in one integrated model.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The sampling procedure of this study was explicitly designed to obtain a sample of emerging adults with substantial variability in living arrangements. Because we are primarily interested in uncovering structural relationships among living situation, motivational regulation, and subjective well-being, we tried to obtain a sample with virtually equal numbers of emerging adults living with their parents and emerging adults who have taken steps toward independent living. In addition, we also balanced the sample on gender and educational level. Although

we stratified our sample by these three variables, no other demographic characteristics were taken into account when sampling participants within these strata. Hence, it should be recognized that we cannot decide upon the representativeness of each of these strata in our sample. To obtain this balanced sample, we asked undergraduate psychology students to contact a family with an emerging adult and his or her parents and to administer questionnaires to the family members during a home visit. These undergraduate students received training and specific instructions from the principle investigator about background characteristics (i.e., living arrangement, gender, and educational level) that their contacted family had to meet. The principle investigator contacted 10% of the participating families by telephone to check the authenticity of the data, and each family acknowledged that they had actually participated in the study. It was stressed that participation was voluntary, and anonymity was guaranteed. Completed questionnaires were either returned by mail or gathered at the participant's home by the undergraduate students. The study was approved by the university's ethics committee.

This procedure resulted in a sample of 224 Belgian emerging adults born in 1983 or 1984. Mean age of the participants was 22 years, 10 months (*SD* = 8 months). This age category was deliberately chosen because emerging adults have been found to leave the parental home from this age on in Western-European countries such as Belgium (Vettenburg et al., 2007). Because of our guided sampling, an almost equal number of men (52%) and women (48%) participated in this study. Somewhat more than half of the participants (58%) were highly educated; that is, they had a college degree or were still attending college at the time the data were gathered. The remaining participants (42%) were college dropouts or individuals who quit their education during high school or immediately after finishing high school. This "forgotten half" is very often neglected in scientific research on emerging adults because they are not as easy to trace as a student population (Arnett, 2004). Approximately half the participants indicated that they were co-residing with their parents (58%), whereas the rest (42%) indicated that they were living independently. For the

purpose of data collection, living away from the parents was defined as staying at the parental home a maximum of once a month, on average. This criterion is somewhat arbitrary and crude, but below we provide a more nuanced and differentiated picture of the participants' living situation on the basis of a broader set of items relating to living arrangement.

Parents of the participating emerging adults were also asked to fill out a short questionnaire. A total of 411 parents agreed to take part in this study (i.e., 89% of the fathers and 94% of the mothers). The mean age of the fathers was 52 years (SD = 4 years), and the mean age of the mothers was 49 years (SD = 4 years). Most of the participating families (75%) were intact (i.e., both parents living together). On a 6-point scale, parents' mean educational level was 3.91 (SD = 1.45), indicating an average of 14 years of education. Net family income was on average situated between 2,500 and 3,000 euro (approximately \$3,200 – \$3,840) per month. As parental level of education and family income were positively correlated (r = .47, p < .001), their mean score was computed as an index of socioeconomic status for the family of origin.

We estimated missing values (5.6% of the values in the data set) using the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm, a method to obtain maximum likelihood estimates (Schafer, 1997). This wellacknowledged procedure was acceptable because Little's (1988) test suggested that the data were missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(600, N = 224) = 643.92$, *ns*. We performed this test and the EM imputation of missing values using all continuous variables in the data set as auxiliary variables.

Measures

All questionnaires were administered in Dutch, the participants' native language. Questionnaires not available in Dutch were translated according to the guidelines of the International Test Commission (Hambleton, 1994). We measured most constructs in this study using self-report. Although there are limitations to self-report data, we consider this method to be suitable given that

most of the constructs measured in this study relate to personal experiences of emerging adults.

Living situation. To obtain a clear picture of the participants' living arrangements, we asked emerging adults to fill out a number of questions tapping different aspects of the residential status. First, they were asked to indicate where they currently lived by choosing between one of the following categories: with both of my parents, with one of my parents, alone, with my partner, in a student's apartment, or other. Next, emerging adults not living with parents were asked to specify how far their present residence was located from the parental home: within walking distance, in a neighboring town, between 20 km and 50 km away, between 50 km and 100 km away, and more than 100 km away. Emerging adults living away from their parents were also asked to report how often they stay over at their parents' home. Answers ranged from once a week, once in 2 weeks, once a month, occasionally to never. Finally, emerging adults indicated whether they had already attained the following criterion of adulthood: no longer living in the household of your parent(s). This criterion is a single item of a larger instrument developed by Arnett (2003) to measure the conceptualization and attainment of adulthood.

Subjective well-being. To assess subjective well-being, we administered three scales. First, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is an often-used, five-item questionnaire measuring whether people cognitively judge their life as (un)satisfying. All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item reads as follows: "In most ways my life is close to my ideal". Previous research supported the reliability and validity of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (e.g., Diener et al., 1985; Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991). Cronbach's alpha was .84 in our sample.

Second, we assessed participants' subjective vitality using the Subjective Vitality Scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). A Dutch version of this questionnaire has been used by Niemiec et al. (2006). A sample item reads as follows: "Currently, I feel so alive I just want to burst." All seven items were scored on a

5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Both the original English version and the Dutch version have adequate reliability and validity (e.g., Niemiec et al., 2006; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Cronbach's alpha was .81 in our sample.

Third, distress and depressive symptoms were measured with the 12-item version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). This questionnaire was translated into Dutch by Hanewald (1987). Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had suffered from somatic, cognitive, and emotional symptoms of depression during the past week. Items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*never or seldom*) to 3 (*mostly or always*). Research has demonstrated the concurrent validity and reliability of the CES-D (Bouma, Ranchor, Sanderman, & van Sonderen, 1995). Cronbach's alpha was .87 in our sample.

Satisfaction with current living situation. A single item measured emerging adults' satisfaction with their living arrangements in particular. After indicating where they currently lived, emerging adults indicated how satisfied they were with this situation on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*absolutely not satisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*).

Motivational regulation for current living situation. To measure the motivational regulations underlying emerging adults' specific living situation, we adapted the widely used Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ; Ryan & Connell, 1989). The SRQ assesses the degree to which an individual's motivation for a particular behavior tends to be relatively autonomous or relatively controlled. Although the SRQ was designed for specific behaviors (e.g., healthy behavior, learning, and exercise), no version was available to investigate the motivational dynamics underlying one's current living situation. Hence, we developed 21 items for use in the context of residential status, covering four specific regulatory styles: external regulation (e.g., "Because my parents pressure me to do so"), introjection (e.g., "Because otherwise I would feel guilty"), identification (e.g., "Because this is a choice that I fully endorse"), and intrinsic motivation (e.g., "Because I find it enjoyable"). Two versions of this questionnaire were available,

one for participants who indicated they were still living with their parents, and one for participants who indicated they were living independently. The items for both versions were equivalent, although some items had to be slightly rephrased, depending on the residential status of emerging adults.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to examine the internal structure of this questionnaire. The scree-plot clearly indicated two factors in both versions. Eigenvalues of the first factor, which was mainly defined by autonomous (i.e., identification and intrinsic motivation) items, were 5.20 and 5.83 for co-residing and independently living participants, respectively. This factor explained 24.78% of the variance in the co-residing group and 27.75% in the group of independently living emerging adults. The second factor, which was mainly defined by controlled (i.e., external regulation and introjection) items, had eigenvalues of 4.87 and 3.66, and explained an additional 23.17% and 17.41% of the variance in the co-residing group and the independently living group, respectively. This two-factor structure is consistent with the structure of the SRQ in other life domains (e.g., Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). To obtain pure and psychometrically sound measures of autonomous and controlled regulation, we only retained items without cross-loadings and with substantial factor loadings (i.e., > .40) on their intended factor. On the basis of these criteria, three controlled items and two autonomous items were removed. The final version of the questionnaire included 16 items, 8 items for both the Controlled and Autonomous subscales. Cronbach's alpha for the Controlled subscale was .77 in the independently living group and .82 in the co-residing group. For the Autonomous subscale, alphas were .92 and .89, respectively.

Autonomy-supportive versus controlling parenting. Two scales were administered to create a composite score for autonomy-supportive versus controlling parenting, that is, the Autonomy-Support subscale of the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991) and the Psychological Control Scale (PCS; Barber, 1996). All items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all*) to 5 (*totally applies*). The seven-item Autonomy-Support subscale of the POPS assesses parents' support of volitional

functioning. The POPS is available in a version for late elementary and middle school children and in a version for college-age children. In this study we used the latter version. The Autonomy-Support subscale was translated into Dutch and validated in earlier research by Soenens et al. (2007) with undergraduate students ranging in age from 17 to 25 years. Emerging adults completed the items about their parents in general. In addition, mothers and fathers filled out a parent version of this scale in which they reported on their support for their child's volitional functioning. A sample item of the emerging adults' version reads as follows: "My parents allow me to decide things for myself". In the parent version of the questionnaire, this item reads as follows: "I allow my child to decide things for himself/herself". Two items were dropped from further analyses because they had very low item-total correlations in the parent versions of the scale. Cronbach's alpha of the remaining five-item scale was .82 for emerging adults, .70 for mothers, and .72 for fathers. The eight-item PCS taps into parental use of intrusive and manipulative control. This widely used scale was translated into Dutch and validated by Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx, and Goossens (2006). Again, both emerging adults and their parents filled out this scale. A sample item of the parent version of the PCS reads as follows: "I am less friendly with my son/daughter if he/she doesn't see things like I do". Cronbach's alpha was .80 for emerging adults, .74 for mothers, and .80 for fathers.

To obtain a composite score for autonomy-supportive versus controlling parenting, we calculated the mean of the autonomy-support items and the reverse-scored psychological control items. Cronbach's alpha for this composite score was .86 for emerging adults, .80 for mothers, and .84 for fathers. Conceptually speaking, parental autonomy support and psychological control indeed represent two highly incompatible parenting dimensions (Grolnick, 2003; Soenens et al., 2007). This approach, which was also justified by the finding that both dimensions are strongly negatively correlated (average $r = -.52$ in our study), has been adopted in previous research (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005). For clarity of presentation, in the

remainder of this article we refer to this composite score as parental autonomy support.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine whether a number of relevant background variables were related to our study variables and, hence, should be controlled for in the main analyses. A multivariate analysis of variance was performed with well-being scores, the motivational regulations of one's living situation, and parental autonomy support as the dependent variables. Independent variables were family structure (i.e., intact vs. nonintact) and emerging adults' gender, level of education, and relationship status (i.e., having a partner or not). We also included two continuous predictors as covariates, namely emerging adults' age and family socioeconomic status. Significant multivariate effects emerged for level of education, $F(9, 193) = 2.68$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$; relationship status, $F(9, 193) = 2.08$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$; and family structure, $F(9, 193) = 2.96$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$.

First, emerging adults with a college degree or still attending college at the time of data collection reported higher satisfaction with life ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.11$) than peers with a high school degree or lower ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.12$), $F(1, 201) = 11.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Furthermore, the highly educated emerging adults reported more satisfaction with their current living situation ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.10$) than those lower educated ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.11$), $F(1, 201) = 5.72$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Second, emerging adults involved in a partner relationship reported higher satisfaction with life ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 0.10$) and higher subjective vitality ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.06$) than their single counterparts ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.13$, and $M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.08$, respectively), $F(1, 201) = 11.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and $F(1, 201) = 4.93$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$, respectively. Emerging adults with a partner also reported more autonomous motives for their current living situation ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.08$) compared with singles ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.11$), $F(1, 201) = 9.86$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Finally, whether one is involved in a romantic relationship had a

small, yet significant, association with the perceptions of parents as autonomy supportive, $F(1, 201) = 4.23$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Emerging adults with a romantic partner viewed their parents as more autonomy supportive ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.05$) than emerging adults without a romantic partner ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.07$). Third, compared with peers from nonintact families, emerging adults from intact families reported higher satisfaction with life ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.08$ vs. $M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.14$), higher subjective vitality ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.05$ vs. $M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.09$), and less depressive symptoms ($M = 0.62$, $SD = 0.04$ vs. $M = 0.87$, $SD = 0.07$), $F(1, 201) = 11.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$; $F(1, 201) = 10.15$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$; and $F(1,201) = 10.01$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$, respectively.

Neither the main effects of age, gender, or socioeconomic status of the family, nor any possible interactions between the demographic variables, were significant. Hence, in subsequent analyses, we only controlled for level of education of the emerging adults, relationship status, and family structure.

Living Situations

Distinguishing types of living situations. A latent class analysis was performed to describe the heterogeneity in emerging adults' types of residence in the most parsimonious and meaningful way. This multivariate technique creates latent classes from categorical indicator variables. The results of a latent class analysis can also be used to classify individual cases to their most likely latent class (Hagenaars & McCutcheon, 2002). We used three objective (i.e., place of residence, distance to parental home, frequency of staying over) and one subjective (i.e., achievement of residential independence) indicator variables to estimate the underlying latent classes. This model was estimated in LEM, a general program for the analysis of categorical data (Vermunt, 1997).

The selection of the number of classes was made on the basis of a number of robust criteria for class enumeration, namely the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), the bootstrapped likelihood ratio test, and the average posterior probabilities (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). The BIC showed that a model with three latent classes yields a better fit ($L^2 = 169.29$, $df = 596$, $p = 1.00$;

BIC = –3,127.19) compared with a model with two (BIC = –3,020.23) or four (BIC = –3,077.95) latent classes. The choice for three, rather than two, latent classes was further supported by the highly significant ($p < .001$) bootstrapped likelihood ratio test comparing these two solutions. Finally, average posterior probabilities indicated that the classification quality in the three-class solution (.99 across three classes) was superior to the classification quality obtained with a four-class solution (.95). In sum, these statistics indicated that the four indicator variables are best represented by three underlying categories of living arrangements. The first category comprised participants who permanently live in the parental home (with both parents or one of the parents; $p = .99$) and who consider themselves as persons who have not yet achieved the status of living independently ($p = .83$). They were labeled "co-residing with parents." The second category consisted for a substantial part of college students who live in a student's apartment during the week ($p = .48$), mostly 20–100 km away from the parental home ($p = .61$), but who return to the parental home every weekend ($p = .58$). These participants obtained moderate scores on the question tapping achievement of an independent living situation ($p = .41$) and thus were labeled "semiautonomous." The final category consisted of emerging adults who live either alone ($p = .27$) or with a partner ($p = .62$), mostly within walking distance from the parental home or in a neighboring town ($p = .70$). These participants reported that they never or rarely stay over with their parents ($p = .87$), and they consider themselves to have achieved the status of living independently ($p = .99$). They were labeled "independent."

On the basis of these results, conditional probabilities were calculated to assign all 224 emerging adults to one of three subtypes of residence. In our sample, 36% of the emerging adults were classified as co-residing with parents, 24% as semiautonomous, and the remaining 40% of the participants were assigned to the independent group.

Living situations and background variables. Next, we tested whether these three types of living situations differ regarding various demographic variables. Chi-square tests suggested that emerging adults in the different types

of housing differ with respect to their level of education, $\chi^2(2, N = 224) = 33.41$, $p < .001$, and relationship status, $\chi^2(2, N = 223) = 23.43$, $p < .001$. Whereas the semiautonomous group mainly consists of highly educated emerging adults (89%), there were about equal numbers of highly educated (58%) and less well educated (42%) participants in the independent group. The majority of participants in the co-residing with parents group (61%) had fewer years of education. Differences in relationship status were mainly found between the category of independent emerging adults and the two other groups. Participants living on their own were more likely to be involved in a relationship (84%) compared with participants in the other two types of living arrangements (50% and 59% for the co-residing and semiautonomous groups, respectively). With respect to the characteristics of the family of origin, a one-way analysis of variance revealed significant differences between the three living situations in terms of socioeconomic status, $F(2, 217) = 6.84$, $p < .01$. Tukey post hoc tests revealed a higher socioeconomic status among the semiautonomous group ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.01$) than among the two other groups ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.45$, and $M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.35$, for the co-residing with parents group and the independent group, respectively). Age, gender, and family structure were unrelated to the distribution across types of residence.

Living situations and study variables. Next, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed to examine differences between the three living situations on the study variables. To control for the effects of education level, relationship status, and family structure, we included these variables in the model as covariates. Results show a significant multivariate effect of living situation on the study variables, $F(18, 418) = 7.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$. Results of the follow-up univariate analyses are presented in Table 1. There were univariate effects of living situation on autonomous motives and satisfaction with one's living situation. First, post hoc Tukey tests indicated that participants in the independent group scored higher on autonomous regulation than participants in the semiautonomous group, who, in turn, scored higher than participants co-residing with their parents. Second, both the semiautonomous and independent emerging

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables across Different Living Situations

	Co-residing with Parents		Semiautonomous		Independently Living			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(2,217)	η^2
Parental autonomy support								
Emerging adult report	3.89	.51	4.02	.54	4.08	(.45)	2.33	.021
Mother report	3.93	.41	3.99	.38	4.04	(.45)	0.34	.003
Father report	3.84	.48	4.06	.43	3.99	(.44)	1.43	.013
Self-Regulation – Living Situation								
Autonomous	3.24^{c}	.71	3.56^{b}	.71	4.37^{a}	(.56)	60.96***	.360
Controlled	1.67	.60	1.72	.44	1.70	(.55)	0.43	.004
Satisfaction with Living Situation	3.93^{b}	.85	4.35^{a}	.78	4.37^{a}	(.82)	5.38**	.047
Subjective well-being								
Life satisfaction	4.72	1.03	4.97	.97	4.96	(.96)	0.17	.002
Subjective vitality	3.38	.62	3.30	.61	3.46	(.58)	1.17	.011
Depressive symptoms	0.64	.48	0.61	.40	0.66	(.48)	0.57	.005

Note. Means that do not share superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$; Tukey contrasts).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.*** $p < .001$.

adults reported more satisfaction with their living situation than those co-residing with parents.

Structural Analysis

Correlational analysis. Correlations among all study variables are presented in Table 2. Correlations between emerging adults', mothers', and fathers' reports on parental autonomy support were significant (average r = .42) and even somewhat more pronounced than correlations typically obtained in parenting research (i.e., rs around .30; Soenens et al., 2006). Hence, parents' and emerging adults' reports can be used as indicators of the same underlying construct. Further, parental autonomy support was significantly related to more autonomous motives, less controlled motives, more subjective well-being, and more satisfaction with the current living situation. These correlations were generally consistent across reporter (emerging adults or parents). An autonomous regulation behind one's living situation was positively related to overall well-being and to satisfaction with one's living arrangement. In contrast, a controlled regulation was associated with more depressive symptoms. Finally, satisfaction with one's living situation was related in expected ways to the three indicators of subjective well-being, namely positively with satisfaction with life and subjective vitality, and negatively with depressive symptoms.

Structural equation modeling. We tested three structural equation models to examine (a) the association between residential status, satisfaction with one's living situation, and subsequent well-being; (b) the additional role of the motivational regulation of one's living situation in the prediction of satisfaction with one's living situation and subsequent well-being; and (c) the role of parental autonomy support in predicting these motivational regulations. Models were estimated with Lisrel 8.71 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996).

Specifically, six latent constructs were modeled. Emerging adults', mothers', and fathers' reports of autonomy support were used as indicators of parental autonomy support. Autonomous motives and controlled motives were each represented by a set of three parcels, consisting of randomly selected items

Table 2

Correlations Among All Study Variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Parental autonomy support								
1. Emerging adult report								
2. Mother report	.40***							
3. Father report	.39***	.47***						
Self-regulation – Living Situation								
4. Autonomous	.31***	.13	.14*					
5. Controlled	−.46***	−.19**	−.20**	.06				
6. Satisfaction with living situation	.25***	.18**	.13	.39***	−.06			
Subjective well-being								
7. Life satisfaction	.32***	.19**	.16*	.30***	−.04	.25***		
8. Subjective vitality	.22***	.21**	.13*	.14*	−.07	.17*	.45***	
9. Depressive symptoms	−.30***	−.27***	−.22***	−.06	.19**	−.25***	−.50***	−.56***

*$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

from both subscales of the SRQ–Living Situation. The latent variable living situation was represented by a single binary variable that was computed as a contrast between the co-residing group and the other two types of living arrangements. This approach was justified by our finding that differences in terms of satisfaction with living arrangement, which is our main dependent variable, only emerged between the co-residing group versus the two other groups. Furthermore, initial testing with two dummy variables, representing the three latent classes, yielded severe estimation problems caused by multicollinearity. Moreover, to check whether the model relations were invariant between the two types of living arrangement that were combined, we computed the variance–covariance matrix of the study variables in both groups separately and compared these matrices using a chi-square difference test. The matrices of the two non-co-resident types of living arrangement did not differ significantly from each other, Satorra–Bentler Scaled chi-square (SBS-χ^2)(52, N = 143) = 65.45, *ns* (Satorra & Bentler, 1994). This further justifies our approach of combining both types of living arrangement into one group. Satisfaction with current living situation was represented by the single item assessing this construct. Finally, satisfaction with life, subjective vitality, and depressive symptomatology were indicators for subjective well-being. In addition to these six substantive latent variables, each of the control variables (i.e., education, relationship status, and family structure) was represented as a latent variable with a single dichotomous indicator. To model each of the single variables as a latent factor (i.e., living situation, satisfaction with current living situation, and three control variables), we fixed the error variance of the indicator to 0, such that each of these single-item indicators was perfectly represented by its underlying latent variable. Although some scholars recommend fixing the error variance of a single indicator to a value that approximates the unreliability of that indicator, we could not adopt this procedure in this study because we did not have information from past research about the reliability of the indicators involved.

Data screening indicated that assumptions of normality were violated both in terms of skewness and kurtosis, $\chi^2(2, N = 224) = 296.27$, $p < .001$.

Therefore, we used the asymptotic covariance matrix as input and checked the SBS-χ^2 to evaluate model fit (N = 224 for all models tested). In addition, we inspected the comparative fit index (CFI), the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), combined cutoff values close to .06 for RMSEA and .09 for SRMR indicate good model fit. A CFI with values of .90 or higher reflects acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990).

Initially, we tested a measurement model with 17 observed variables and 9 latent variables (i.e., 6 substantive latent factors and 3 control variables). This model approached the criteria for acceptable fit: SBS-$\chi^2(88) = 195.54$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .08. Factor loadings of the indicator variables on their respective latent factors were high (ranging from .52 to .93; M = .73) and significant ($p < .001$). Thus, a reliable measurement model was attained.

Next, a series of three structural models was tested to investigate the main hypotheses of this study. The control variables were added as predictors of each of the constructs in the models. The first model included living situation (co-residing with parents vs. not) as a predictor of satisfaction with one's living situation, which, in turn, predicted subjective well-being. Estimation of this model, SBS-$\chi^2(16) = 25.98$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06, showed that both hypothesized paths were significant. Emerging adults co-residing with their parents experienced less satisfaction with their living situation compared with the others ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$), and satisfaction with one's living situation in turn positively predicted subjective well-being ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$). Adding a direct path from living situation to subjective well-being did not significantly improve the model fit, ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 0.49$, *ns*, and this path was not significant ($\beta = .05$, *ns*). Living situation did have a significant indirect association with overall subjective well-being through satisfaction with one's living situation ($z = -2.25$, $p < .05$).

In the second model, autonomous and controlled motivation were added as predictors, allowing us to test the relative contribution of living situation and the motivational regulations in the prediction of satisfaction with one's living situation. Estimation of this model, SBS-$\chi^2(68) = 124.79$, CFI = .96, RMSEA =

.06, SRMR = .09, revealed that the previously significant path from living situation to satisfaction with living situation became nonsignificant (β = –.08, *ns*) when accounting for the motivational regulations. Further, whereas an autonomous regulation was positively related to satisfaction with one's living situation (β = .39, $p < .001$), the association between controlled regulation andsatisfaction with living situation was not (β = –.08, *ns*). Similar to the previous model, the path from satisfaction with current living situation to subjective well-being was significant (β = .26, $p < .01$). Adding a direct path from autonomous motivation to subjective well-being did not significantly improve model fit, ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 0.24$, *ns*, and this path was not significant (β = .06, *ns*), suggesting that the relation of autonomous motivation to subjective well-being was mediated by satisfaction with one's living situation. This idea was further supported by the significant indirect association of autonomous motivation with subjective well-being through the satisfaction with one's living situation ($z = 2.48$, $p < .05$). In contrast, adding a direct path from controlled motivation to subjective well-being did improve model fit, ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 5.36$, $p < .05$, and this path was significant (β = –.13, $p < .05$). In addition, the indirect association between controlled motivation and subjective well-being through the satisfaction with one's living situation was not significant ($z = –1.31$, $p > .05$), indicating that the association between controlled motivation and subjective well-being was direct, rather than indirect or mediated.

In the third model, parental autonomy support was added as an exogenous variable predicting the motivational regulations, current living situation, and subjective well-being. This integrated model, depicted in Figure 1, had an acceptable fit, SBS-$\chi^2(106) = 215.10$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .08. The hypothesized paths from parental autonomy support to both motivational regulations were significant, with autonomy-supportive parenting predicting more autonomous and less controlled motives. There was no significant relation between autonomy-supportive parenting and living situation. As expected, parental autonomy support did significantly predict overall subjective well-being. As in the previous set of models, only autonomous (but not controlle

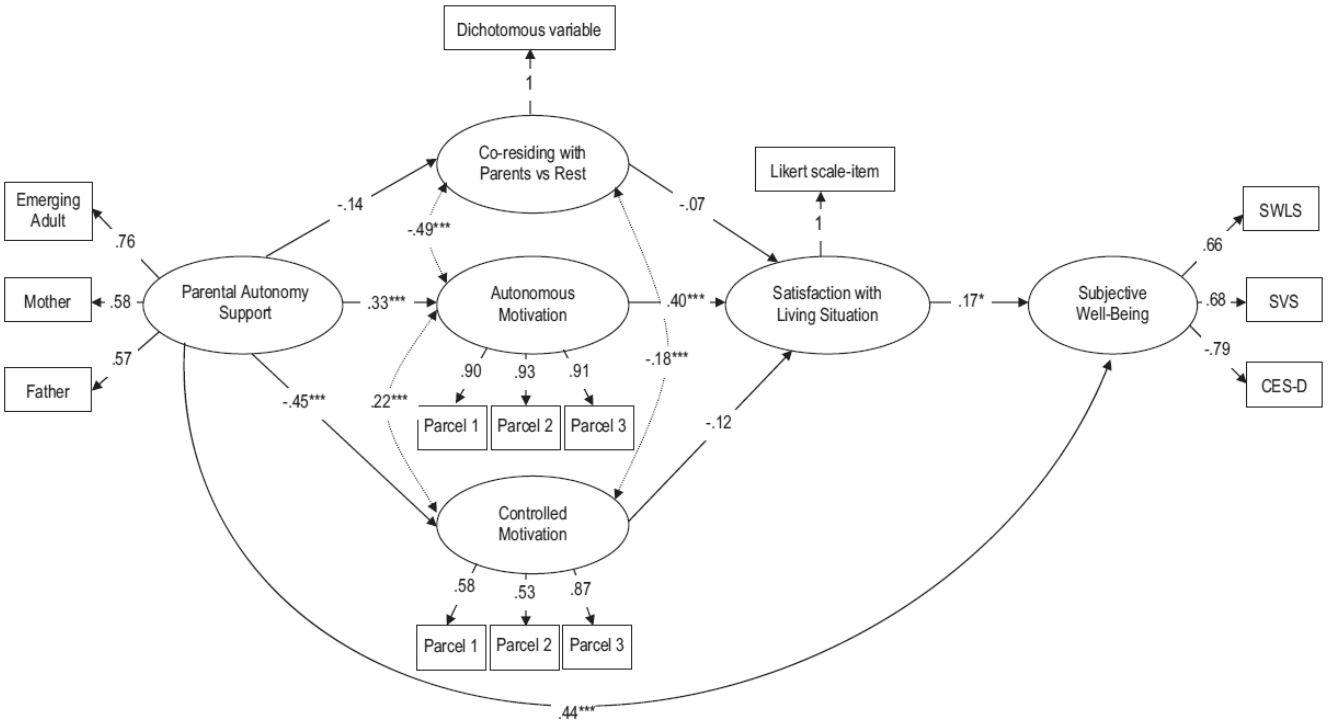

Figure 1. Structural model of the relationships between parental autonomy support, living situation (co-residing with parents vs. semiautonomous and independent living), motives for current living situation, satisfaction with current living situation and subjective well-being. For clarity of presentation, the effects of education level, partnership, and family structure are not shown. SBS-$\chi^2(106) = 215.10$, comparative fit index = .94, root-mean-square error of approximation = .07, standardized root-mean square residual = .08. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale; SVS = Subjective Vitality Scale; CES-S = Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression scale.

motivation was related to satisfaction with one's living situation. Again, emerging adults' residential status did not show an independent association with the satisfaction with one's living situation. Contrary to the previous model, adding a direct path from controlled motivation to subjective well-being did not significantly improve the fit of the model, ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 0.007$, *ns*. As this path was not significant ($\beta = .01$, *ns*), it was trimmed from the final model. The paths depicted in Figure 1 suggest that autonomy-supportive parenting is indirectly related to satisfaction with one's living situation through an autonomous regulation of one's living situation, and this was supported by a test for indirect associations ($z = 3.57$, $p < .01$). In addition, the indirect association of autonomy-supportive parenting with subjective well-being through the motivational regulations and satisfaction with one's living situation approached significance ($z = 1.89$, $p = .06$). Because autonomy-supportive parenting had both a direct and an indirect association with subjective well- being, it can be concluded that this relationship was partially, rather than fully, mediated.

To examine whether the findings obtained with the latent construct representing parental autonomy support are primarily or even uniquely driven by emerging adults' report on autonomy support (rather than by the parents' own reports), we ran an additional set of analyses in which emerging adults' report of autonomy support was removed as an indicator of the autonomy-support construct. In these analyses, the latent construct of parental autonomy support was only indicated by mothers' and fathers' reports of autonomy support. The results of this model, SBS-$\chi^2(93) = 168.47$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .08, are very similar to those obtained with emerging adults' report of autonomy support included. Whereas the path coefficients starting from parental autonomy support decreased somewhat (i.e., path to autonomous motivation decreased from .33 to .17, path to controlled motivation from –.45 to –.34, and direct path to subjective well-being from .44 to .42), all significant paths depicted in Figure 1 remained significant. Together, these results indicate that the findings on parental autonomy support are not solely driven by emerging adults' self-reports.

Discussion

Against the background of the trend of delayed home leaving among emerging adults in postindustrial societies, this study was designed to examine the association between emerging adults' living arrangement and their well-being. In line with ideas derived from SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), we found that the motivational dynamics undergirding one's living situation matter for emerging adults' well-being. In addition, we found that autonomy-supportive parenting predicted these motivational dynamics.

Operationalizing Living Arrangements in Emerging Adulthood

Although delayed home leaving represents a salient trend in many Western countries, research about this demographic phenomenon is sparse and has often led to contradictory results because of the lack of a clear conceptualization of emerging adults' living arrangements. Compared with a few decades ago, living situations of emerging adults are no longer restricted to either living with the parents or starting up a separate household. Instead, a broad array of nonfamily living arrangements are now acceptable and available (de Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, & Dourleijn, 2001). Nonfamily living arrangements are mostly situated somewhere in between living with one's parents and living fully independently and are therefore often denoted as semiautonomous (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986).

The first research question guiding this study was whether, apart from a group of emerging adults living with parents and a group living fully independently, a group of emerging adults with a semiautonomous status would exist in a sample of Belgian emerging adults. Consistent with expectations, a latent class analysis revealed three types of living situations, namely co-residing with parents, living independently, and semiautonomous living. People who live in the parental home on a permanent basis at this age are considered delayed home leavers (Seiffge-Krenke, 2006). This living arrangement is most common among those with a lower education. The majority of the 22- and 23-year-olds who live independently have a partner with whom they establish a separate

household. Semiautonomous living is situated in between living with parents and establishing a separate household. Whereas semiautonomy in our study is largely characteristic of college students who return to the parental home every weekend, in other studies this subgroup often includes young people in military service as well (Goldscheider & DaVanzo,1986; Mayseless, 2004). Belgium suspended the military service in 1993, which explains why the semiautonomous status in our sample was largely confined to college students. Moreover, the fact that this student population returns to the parental home frequently (i.e., once a week) is another specific feature of the Belgian situation. That is, Belgium is a small country with a relatively high number of institutes for higher education compared with its size. Hence, distances between the parental residence and college institutions are typically small. The possibility exists for semiautonomous living to take on a different shape in countries where distances between the parental home and college institutions are larger. It seems plausible to assume that in such countries semiautonomous living may share more features with the status of independent living (e.g., low frequency of contact with parents) or may even coincide with that status. In sum, although the meaning of the semiautonomous living situation may differ somewhat between countries, the central feature of this category seems to be that it represents a nonstable, transitional status for those who have taken first steps toward residential independence, yet have not fully attained independence.

Although the categorization obtained in our study is consistent with earlier findings in the United States (e.g., Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986), replication of our results with a more representative sample is warranted before we can firmly conclude that the various types of living arrangements of emerging adults in Belgium can be comprehensively captured by three classes. Furthermore, cross-national research is needed (a) to examine whether similar classifications exist in other postindustrial societies and (b) to assess similarities and differences in the meaning of the different living situations across nations. Moreover, it remains to be examined whether the use of more or a different set of

indicators to classify emerging adults' living arrangements would result in a similar set of discerned groups.

Psychological Outcomes of Home-Leaving Patterns

Initially, we found that emerging adults' living situation is related to the satisfaction with their specific living situation. Compared with emerging adults co-residing with their parents, people living semiautonomously or independently reported more satisfaction with their living situation, and this satisfaction was, in turn, related to higher subjective well-being. Living with one's parents during emerging adulthood thus seems pernicious for one's subjective well-being, a finding that is consistent with ideas derived from SIT (Blos, 1979). Co-residing with parents at this age seems to inhibit young adults' achievement of independence and adulthood, which comes at a cost for their well-being (Elm & Schwartz, 2006; Flanagan et al., 1993; White, 2002).

However, the contribution of emerging adults' living situation to satisfaction with one's living situation disappeared when taking into account the motivational dynamics underlying one's living situation. In line with SDT, our results suggest that the motivational regulations behind one's residential status are more essential for emerging adults' well-being than their objective place of residence per se. Specifically, emerging adults experience more wellbeing when their place of residence reflects their personal values and needs (i.e., autonomously motivated). Thus, whether one lives away from parents and, as such, displays behavioral signs of independence, or instead still co-resides with one's parents and, as such, displays behavioral signs of dependence, is less strongly predictive of satisfaction with a living situation and subsequent well-being than the degree to which one experiences that living situation as freely chosen. This finding is reminiscent of the findings obtained by Soenens et al. (2007) that parents' promotion of independence is, as such, positively related to child well-being, but that this effect disappears when taking into account the effect of parents' promotion of volitional functioning. In sum, both the individual pursuit and the environmental promotion of independence seem to be less critical

for well-being and adjustment than the intrapersonal experience and environmental support of volition.

Nonetheless, keeping in mind the striking connection between type of living situation and autonomous motivation, we should interpret these results cautiously. Emerging adults who co-reside with their parents seem to report less autonomous motives for their living situation than the semi-independent group, who, in turn, report less autonomous motives than the independently living emerging adults. An independent living situation seems to provide emerging adults with better opportunities for volitional functioning and may, as such, contribute indirectly to well-being. Therefore, given that autonomous motivation is clearly tied up with type of living situation, the possible contribution of living situation to well-being should not be entirely dismissed.

However, it is notable that even at this stage in life, some young people still live in the parental household because of their own volition. Besides parental autonomy support, we speculate that the quality of sibling relationships and personality features such as emotional reliance (Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov, & Kim, 2005), as well as the interactions between these factors, can also contribute to an autonomous motivation to live with the parents during emerging adulthood. Future research is needed to unravel what it actually means to have an autonomous motivation to co-reside with parents, thereby taking into account both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors and their interactions.

Parental Antecedents of Motives for Living Situation

Our results concerning the parental antecedents of the motives for one's current living situation confirm our expectations and previous studies (Knafo & Assor, 2007; Ryan et al., 2006). Autonomy-supportive parenting predicted more autonomous and less controlled motivational regulations in the residential area. In contrast, parental autonomy support was unrelated to emerging adults' objective living situation. This makes sense given that we conceptualized parental autonomy support in this study as promotion of volitional functioning, rather than promotion of independence (Soenens et al., 2007). Parents' support

for volitional functioning indeed seems most directly relevant to emerging adults' volitional functioning at the intrapersonal level (as reflected in more autonomous and less controlled motivations) than for their independent functioning (as reflected in an independent living situation). Moreover, adolescents' volitional functioning has been shown to significantly mediate the relation of promotion of volitional functioning by parents to children's adjustment (Soenens et al., 2007). Our findings confirmed this. Autonomy-supportive parenting related to an autonomous regulation of one's living arrangement, which related positively to satisfaction with the living situation and subjective well-being. Note that there remained a strong direct relation of autonomy-supportive parenting to subjective well-being after controlling for the motivational regulations, indicating that the effect of parental autonomy support is only partially mediated by these motivational regulations. This partial mediation by underlying motives seems logical given that we only tapped into emerging adults' motives for one particular domain, whereas multiple domains and their underlying motives are likely to codetermine well-being.

We believe that our findings are of practical importance for families with emerging adults. Results highlight the ongoing importance of autonomy-supportive parent-child relationships during emerging adulthood. That is, during this developmental phase, individuals still benefit of an autonomy-supportive family climate. Parents with an autonomy-supportive style are empathic and encourage their child to make personally valuable choices. Specifically during emerging adulthood, individuals are confronted with an overwhelming array of decisions and possibilities. One of these decisions involves choosing between living arrangements, which are now more diverse and unstable than before. When parents are autonomy-supportive, children are stimulated to choose a living situation that reflects their true preferences, which in turn contributes to their well-being. This also implies that, as long as delayed home leaving reflects a personal choice, rather than parental or intrapersonal pressure, staying with one's parents should not be problematic for an emerging adult's well-being.

The Meaning of Autonomy

Growing up is inextricably intertwined with the development of autonomous functioning. Particularly during adolescence and emerging adulthood, the development of autonomy is considered a central developmental task. Unfortunately, the concept of autonomy has been defined in different ways, such that a clear conceptualization of this construct is currently lacking (Beyers, Goossens, Vansant, & Moors, 2003; Hmel & Pincus, 2002; Soenens et al., 2007). Developmental researchers tend to define autonomy in terms of independence. From this perspective, adolescents would strive toward independence by distancing themselves behaviorally and psychologically from their parents and by taking on more responsibility for their own lives (Levy-Warren, 1999). With such a conceptualization of autonomy, dependence on parents is viewed as the opposite of self-reliance and independence.

SDT, in contrast, defines autonomy as behavior enacted with a sense of volition (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Highly autonomous individuals endorse actions that fully embody their personal goals and values. The opposite of autonomy in SDT is not dependence but rather heteronomy (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005), which refers to enacting behavior that is controlled by external forces or by internal compulsions. It should be clear that whereas independence and volitional functioning are both concepts covered by the umbrella-term "autonomy," they denote two distinct constructs. Thus, highly independent individuals do not necessarily function in a volitional way or vice versa (Ryan et al., 2006).

The conceptual differentiation between independence and volitional functioning is particularly relevant in the present study. Indeed, the act of leaving the parental home can be regarded as a specific expression of independent behavior, as it literally involves distancing oneself from the parents and taking on responsibility for oneself. This act, however, can be regulated by more or less volitional motives. When an emerging adult chooses to move out of the parental home because this decision truly represents his or her values and beliefs, this person displays both independent and volitional functioning. However, people may also leave the parental home because they feel obliged by their parents or to

avoid feelings of embarrassment. In such cases, independence is attained in a controlled and, hence, nonvolitional way. The differentiation between independence and volitional functioning is of critical importance, as studies in various life domains have found that autonomy in the sense of volitional functioning is relatively more critical for people's well-being than autonomy defined as independence (e.g., Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Soenens et al., 2007).

To avoid confusion in the future and because the specific act of home leaving is considered as a manifestation of independence, we suggest that the term semiautonomy introduced by Goldscheider and DaVanzo (1986) is inaccurate and should be replaced by the term semi-independent living because this term more accurately captures the meaning of this intermediate status.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study revealed a number of interesting findings, some limitations and suggestions for future research require attention. First, as we measured satisfaction with current living situation by a single item, future research might create a set of valid and reliable items that tap satisfaction with residential status in a more comprehensive fashion. Second, the measures in this study were exclusively assessed through emerging adults' or parents' selfreports. Because of the limitations associated with self-report methodology (e.g., common method variance and reporting bias), future researchers should replicate these results by using more diverse methods to operationalize the constructs in this study. For instance, to avoid problems with self-reports of parenting, future studies may rely on observational methods to measure parental autonomy support. Third, as already discussed, the nonrepresentativeness of our sample casts doubts upon the generalization of the typology of living arrangements of emerging adults found in this study. Furthermore, because we failed to obtain representativeness (e.g., with respect to socioeconomic status and type of living area [rural vs. urban]) within the strata that we sampled (i.e., the living arrangements), it remains to be examined whether the structural relationships

obtained in this sample can be generalized to more representative samples of emerging adults and their parents.

Finally, given the cross-sectional design of this study, the time-ordered sequence of events depicted in Figure 1 could not be optimally tested. Longitudinal research is thus needed to examine further the dynamic interplay of living arrangement, motivational regulations, and well-being. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine further associations between parenting, motives, and well-being. Prior longitudinal research already provided some evidence that autonomy-supportive parenting predicts increases in well-being (Joussemet, Koestner, Lekes, & Landry, 2005). Nevertheless, from our cross-sectional study, we cannot conclude with certainty that an autonomy-supportive parenting climate actually predicts well-being in emerging adults. Moreover, because we proposed a time-ordered sequence from parental autonomy support to well-being through an autonomous regulatory style, longitudinal research needs to confirm this sequence of events.

Conclusion

Living with one's parents during emerging adulthood is not necessarily pernicious for one's subjective well-being. Rather, a living situation in harmony with one's personal values and preferences (i.e., reflecting autonomously motivated behavior) is paramount to emerging adults' subjective well-being. Parents can promote self-determined functioning in the residential area by being autonomy-supportive (i.e., promoting volitional functioning). This requires parents to be empathic, offer possibilities to make personally endorsed choices, and refrain from controlling strategies.

Chapter 5

"Why do they have to grow up so fast?" Parental separation anxiety and emerging adults' pathology of separation-individuation[1]

This study examined associations between parental separation anxiety, controlling parenting, and difficulties in the separation-individuation process, as manifested in separation-individuation pathology. In a sample of emerging adults involved in the process of home leaving ($N = 232$) and their parents, it was found that parental separation anxiety is positively related to separation-individuation pathology in emerging adults. Dependency-oriented controlling parenting served as an intervening variable in the relationship between parents' feelings of separation anxiety and pathology of the separation-individuation process in emerging adults. These associations were not moderated by emerging adults' residential status (i.e., living with parents or (semi-)independently), suggesting that parental characteristics and behaviors remain important antecedents of separation-individuation pathology even when one no longer lives in the parental household.

[1]Kins, E., Soenens, B., & Beyers, W. (2011). "Why do they have to grow up so fast?" Parental separation anxiety and emerging adults' pathology of separation-individuation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 67,* 647-664.

According to psychodynamic models of development, the process of separation-individuation plays a pivotal role in personality development during childhood, adolescence, and beyond. Disturbances in this developmental process have serious implications for adult personality and social relationships (Pine, 1979). Pathology of the separation-individuation process is, for instance, manifested in difficulties to differentiate the self from others and intolerance for aloneness. In this study we investigated a number of presumed parental antecedents of pathological separation-individuation during emerging adulthood, a period between the age of 18 and the late twenties characterized by important changes in the parent-child relationship (Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2000). Specifically, we focused on the role of parental separation anxiety and dependency-oriented psychological control. As emerging adulthood is a time of imminent leave-taking from the parental home, with separation-individuation issues strongly coming to the fore, we also explored the role of the residential status among emerging adults.

The Separation-Individuation Process

Although separation-individuation is an intrapsychic process that remains active during all stages of life, it is considered a central developmental task during adolescence (Blos, 1967, 1979). This process involves the relinquishing of infantile self-conceptions and the establishment of a sense of self that is distinct and individuated from parental object representations. Due to physical and cognitive maturation, adolescents no longer see themselves as children and no longer view their parents as the all-knowing and almighty figures they once were during childhood (i.e., deidealization). Thus, adolescents become aware of their separateness from parents and actively pursue an individuated sense of self (Levy-Warren, 1999).

Separation-individuation not only refers to a redefinition of the self but also to a redefinition of the relationship with caregivers. That is, young people need to transform the former hierarchical parent-child relationship into a mutual relationship between two equal adults (Aquilino, 1997; Grotevant & Cooper,

1986). As such, successful separation-individuation does not necessarily imply emotional detachment or complete independence from parents. Instead, there is an ongoing connectedness with the parents, and studies have indeed shown that parents remain important sources of support for their adolescents (Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005; Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008; Quintana & Kerr, 1993). Ideally, the parent-child relationship increasingly reflects symmetry, as the infantile nature of the relationship is given up. Hence, separation-individuation is not about breaking bonds with parents, but about the resolution of a dialectic balance between maintaining a sense of connectedness to the family and establishing an individuated self (Baltes & Silverberg, 1994; Frank, Butler-Avery, & Laman, 1988; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989).

Although controversy exists in the literature concerning the adaptive function of separation-individuation (Beyers & Goossens, 1999), research has shown that successful resolution of this process is critical for healthy psychosocial functioning. That is, being able to maintain and regulate a healthy balance between closeness and distance in relationships with significant others has been related to better adjustment (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Frank, Pirsch, & Wright, 1990; Holmbeck & Leake, 1999; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989). Conversely, disturbances in this process—which will be referred to in this study as pathology of separation-individuation—seem to have serious implications for adult personality and social relationships (Pine, 1979). According to Pine (1979), pathology of the separation-individuation process can be divided into lower-order and higher-order disturbances depending on the level of self-other differentiation. In the lower-order disturbance, pathology is rooted in a failure to differentiate the self from others. Because there are no clear boundaries between the self and others, there is a loss of a sense of separateness. This lack of differentiation could come with either feelings of panic over merging or with a pathological acceptance of this self-other unity. One manifestation of this lower-order disturbance is rebellion, where children try to be as different from parents as possible, because taking on any characteristics of the parents would be experienced as a sense of

loss. In higher-order disturbances the self is already differentiated from others, but pathology is tied to this differentiation process. Instead of being characterized by feelings of merger, these disturbances are characterized by a fear of loss of the differentiated other, as expressed for instance in an intolerance of aloneness, coercion in order to gain omnipotent control over the other, and deficits in object constancy (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Pine, 1979). The latter manifestation of a higher-order disturbance denotes a difficulty to hold a constant inner representation of the other, resulting in a defense mechanism of splitting internal representations of the self and others into strict categories of good and bad. Splitting expresses itself in thinking in extremes or black and white thinking. These oscillations in experiences of the self and others lead to chaotic relationships, identity diffusion and extreme mood swings.

Disturbances in the process of separation-individuation have been found to relate to insecure attachment, maladjustment to college, and symptomatology (e.g., depression, anxiety, somatization, and obsessive-compulsion; Lapsley, Aalsma, & Varshney, 2001; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Furthermore, several studies showed that pathological separation-individuation is related to personality disorders and to borderline personality disorder in particular (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Dolan, Evans, & Norton, 1992). Given the negative well-being outcomes associated with pathological separation, it is important to study possible antecedents of disturbances in the process of separation-individuation. Because healthy separation-individuation is about establishing a separate self within the context of an ongoing connectedness to the parents, parents' reaction to the developmental needs of their offspring possibly plays a decisive role in the course of the separation-individuation process (Allen et al., 1994; Baltes, & Silverberg, 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997). One parental feature that may interfere with a supportive parental response to children's increasing independence is separation anxiety.

Parental Separation Anxiety

Parents' responses to separation-related issues, including their children's increasing independence, can be very diverse. Separation responses can include anxiety associated with being apart from the child, sadness with the imminent or existing loss, and anger or frustration about the inability to maintain close proximity. Such unpleasant emotional states, tied to the separation experience, are referred to as parental separation anxiety (Bartle-Haring, Brucker, & Hock, 2002; Hock et al., 2001; Hock & Lutz, 1998).

Research on parental separation anxiety has focused primarily on parents of infants and young children (Hock & Lutz, 1998; McBride & Belsky, 1988; Stifter, Coulehan, & Fish, 1993; Wood, 2006). Parents' feelings about separation from their adolescent or emerging adult children have been studied to a lesser degree. Hock et al. (2001) found that parents' separation responses towards adolescents can be represented by two dimensions: Anxiety About Distancing and Comfort with Secure Base Role. "Anxiety about distancing" reflects parental feelings of discomfort and loss in response to their adolescents' growing affiliation with others and decreasing involvement with parents. Parents who are highly anxious about their adolescent's distancing deny their child's increasing striving for independence and demonstrate age-inappropriate behavior toward their child. "Comfort with secure base role" on the other hand reflects parental commitment to being accessible for support and advice to their adolescent children who are expanding their social world. Although these parents respect the developmental needs of their adolescents, they too might experience a sense of loss when they are not so obviously needed anymore as during childhood.

Although anxiety about distancing and comfort with secure base role have been positively correlated in empirical research, both dimensions also show a differentiated pattern of associations with measures of parent and adolescent psychosocial functioning, with anxiety about distancing emerging as a relatively more maladaptive parental orientation than comfort with secure base role (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Hock et al., 2001; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2006). Hock et al. (2001), for instance, found that self-other

differentiation was lower in families where parents scored high on anxiety about distancing. Parental anxiety about distancing has been negatively related to identity development in late adolescence and early adulthood, particularly within father-daughter dyads (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002).

The present study aims to add to this limited body of literature on associations between parental separation anxiety and outcomes of the separation-individuation process during (late) adolescence and emerging adulthood. Although parental separation anxiety might also be determined by characteristics of the child (McBride & Belsky, 1988), we specifically hypothesize that high scores on parental anxiety about distancing will be positively associated with emerging adults' pathology of separation-individuation, whereas high scores on parental comfort with secure base role will be unrelated or negatively related to emerging adults' pathology of separation-individuation. In addition we considered the possibility that the hypothesized relationship between parental separation anxiety and emerging adults' pathological separation-individuation would be (at least partially) mediated by parenting processes and by dependency-oriented parental psychological control in particular.

Dependency-Oriented Psychological Control

Psychological control is a form of intrusive parenting behavior, characteristic of parents who pressure their children through manipulative strategies such as guilt induction, love withdrawal, and conditional approval (Barber, 1996). Because psychologically controlling parents fail to take an empathic stance toward their children and pressure them to meet the parents' standards, their behavior interferes with the child's need for autonomy (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Research has consistently shown that psychological control is predictive of poor adjustment and of internalizing problems in particular (Barber, Stoltz, & Olsen, 2005; Soenens et al., 2008). In this study, we argue that parental psychological control may play an intervening role in associations between parents' separation anxiety and emerging adults' pathological separation-individuation.

First, theory and research suggest a link between parental separation anxiety and psychological control. Soenens et al. (2006), for instance, argued that parents who are highly anxious about their child's distancing perceive the growing independence of their child as a threat to the parent-child relationship. These parents may use psychological control as a means to keep the child within close proximity. Consistent with this reasoning, Soenens et al. (2006) found that parental anxiety about distancing was related to a general measure of parental psychological control. Parental comfort with secure base role was negatively related to psychological control, suggesting that parents who deal adequately with their child's developmental striving for independence refrain from such controlling parenting strategies. In a subsequent study, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Luyten (2010) examined associations between parental separation anxiety and dependency-oriented psychological control. Dependency-oriented psychological control is defined as a specific form of psychological control driven by parental concerns about interpersonal closeness and relatedness. These parents use pressuring and intrusive parenting strategies in order to keep the child emotionally and physically in close proximity. In line with the notion that separation-anxious parents would use psychological control as a pressuring means to enforce dependency and parent-child closeness, Soenens et al. (2010) found that parental anxiety about distancing was strongly related with dependency-oriented psychological control.

Second, theory and research suggest that psychological control, and dependency-oriented psychological control in particular, may play a role in the development of pathological separation-individuation. According to Barber (1996), for instance, a psychologically controlling parenting climate will interfere with the development of individuation as such a climate is nonresponsive to the child's needs and allows no space for individuality. Similarly, Wood (2006) argued that parental intrusiveness may evoke separation anxiety in children. As children of intrusive and overprotective parents have few experiences with independent action and are prone to misperceive novel and ambiguous situations as threatening, they are likely to respond fearfully to separations. This

hypothesized association between intrusive parenting and separation anxiety has been empirically confirmed in samples of both children (Wood, 2006) and late adolescents (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009).

Role of Emerging Adults' Residential Status

Emerging adulthood is the time period in human life span between adolescence and adulthood. It is characterized by exploration in various life domains (Arnett, 2000). When emerging adults are in the process of home leaving, separation-individuation issues are likely to become prominent again in the parent-child relationship (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990). As a part of the general delay of the transition to adulthood in Western postindustrial societies, young people co-reside in the parental home longer or return to the parental home after a short period of independent living (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994). Although research on this topic is sparse, there is some evidence that living with parents at this age could be detrimental for emerging adults' functioning. The redefinition of the parent-child relationship into an increasingly symmetrical relationship has shown to be particularly problematic when young people and their parents live under the same roof (Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). Emerging adults co-residing with their parents demonstrate, at least in Western postindustrial societies, a more negative parent-child relationship than their independently living peers, reflecting less independence, less support, and less mutual respect (Flanagan et al., 1993; Sullivan & Sullivan, 1980; White & Rogers, 1997). To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to examine whether emerging adults' living condition has a main effect on a direct measure of pathology of separation-individuation as well as on its' hypothesized antecedents (i.e., parental separation anxiety and dependency-oriented psychological control). It could be argued that the process of separation-individuation is more salient and less likely to be resolved for co-residing emerging adults and their parents. Hence, we aimed to examine whether emerging adults living in the parental household display more disturbances in the process of separation-individuation, have

parents who are more anxious about their child's distancing, and have parents who more often use psychologically controlling parenting strategies to keep their child within close boundaries. In addition, we aimed to explore whether emerging adults' residential status would moderate the hypothesized relationships between parental separation anxiety, dependency-oriented psychological control, and pathological separation-individuation. Because emerging adults living in the parental household are exposed to parental influences on a daily base, their parents' functioning and rearing style may affect them more strongly compared to emerging adults who live independently. Accordingly, we examined whether the hypothesized associations between parental antecedents and pathological separation-individuation would be more pronounced among co-residing emerging adults compared with their peers who have already taken steps towards independent living.

The Present Study

This study had four main research questions. First, we aimed to examine direct associations between parental separation anxiety and pathological separation-individuation among emerging adults. We hypothesized that high parental anxiety about their child's distancing would be related to more pathological separation-individuation, whereas parental comfort with being an ongoing source of security for their almost-adult-child would be unrelated or negatively related to pathological separation-individuation. Second, we aimed to examine the mediating role of perceived parental dependency-oriented psychological control in associations between parents' separation-related feelings and pathological separation-individuation. Contrary to most past research, which typically focused on maternal separation anxiety only, we examined both maternal and paternal separation anxiety and dependency-oriented psychological control. Therefore, both the direct effects and mediation model were estimated separately for mothers and fathers to explore if the hypothesized paths in the models generalize across parent gender.[1] Third, we explored the main effect of emerging adults' residential status on pathology of the separation-individuation

process and its' hypothesized antecedents. We investigated mean level differences across the various residential statuses to test whether continued coresidence with parents in emerging adulthood was associated with more separation-individuation pathology, parental separation anxiety, and dependency-oriented psychological control.

Fourth, we examined the possible moderating effect of emerging adults' residential status. Although we had no clear predictions about this moderating effect, we were particularly interested to see if the hypothesized paths between parental separation anxiety, dependency-oriented psychological control, and pathological separation-individuation were stronger for co-residing emerging adults compared with emerging adults who have already taken steps towards independent living.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants in this study were emerging adults and their parents. We deliberately chose to sample emerging adults aged 21 to 26, because we found it particularly relevant to study emerging adults who are in the process of home leaving. Undergraduate students, participating in a course on developmental psychology, collected data for this study. To ascertain that we would obtain a sample with substantial variability in age and gender, each student was asked to

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[1]We chose to estimate separate models for maternal and paternal ratings, rather than having both in the same structural model, for a number of reasons. First, we did not have a priori theoretical expectations about which parent would be more influential in fostering pathology of the separation-individuation process. Rather than assessing the relative contribution of mothers and fathers in the development of pathology of the separation-individuation process, we are more interested in replicating a process model across paternal and maternal ratings of separation anxiety and psychological control. Second, there are also some methodological arguments against entering paternal and maternal ratings simultaneously into one model. The approach of entering both variables simultaneously into the predictive model often yields contradictory, unstable, and sample-specific results (see Stoltz, Barber, & Olsen, 2005, for an elaborate discussion of this problem).

contact one family with an emerging adult aged between 21 and 23 years and one family with an emerging adult aged between 24 and 26 years. Moreover, one of the emerging adults had to be female and the other had to be male. Only 5% of the contacted families refused to participate in the study. Emerging adults and parents who agreed to take part in this study received a questionnaire, which they were asked to complete during a home visit. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed.

This procedure resulted in a sample of 232 emerging adults with a mean age of 23 years and 7 months (*SD* = 1 year, 9 months). Due to the sampling procedure, an equal number of men and women participated in this study. The majority of the participants was highly educated (75%) and came from intact families (79%). On the basis of previous research charting the different types of residential statuses of emerging adults in Belgium, (Kins, Beyers, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2009), each emerging adult was asked to indicate one of three types of residential status, that is: (a) living with parents, (b) living semi-independently (e.g., living in a student room during the week, yet returning to the parental home during weekends), or (c) living fully independently. At the time of data gathering 43% of the emerging adults were living permanently in the parental household, 26% were living semi-independently, and 31% were living fully independently. Furthermore, a total of 442 parents (i.e., 99% of the mothers and 91% of the fathers) agreed to take part in the study. Mean age was 50 years (*SD* = 4 years) and 52 years (*SD* = 4 years), for mothers and fathers respectively. On a 6-point scale, mothers' mean educational level was 3.98 (*SD* = 1.29) and fathers' educational level was 4.24 (*SD* = 1.36), indicating an average of 14 years of education for both parents.

Missing values in the data set (3%) were estimated using the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm, a method used to obtain maximum likelihood estimates (Schafer, 1997). As Little's test (1988) suggested that data were missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(624, N = 232) = 511.17$, *ns*, this procedure for imputation of missing values was deemed acceptable. Consequently, $N = 232$ for all analyses.

Measures

All questionnaires were administered in Dutch, the participants' mother tongue. Questionnaires not available in Dutch were translated according to the guidelines of the International Test Commission (Hambleton, 1994). Items of all measures were scored on 5-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Scale scores were computed by taking the mean of the scale items.

Pathology of the separation-individuation process. Emerging adults' manifestations of disturbances in the separation-individuation process were measured with the Separation- Individuation Inventory (SII; Christenson & Wilson, 1985). In recent studies, this 39-item questionnaire has been denoted as PATHSEP (Lapsley et al., 2001; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Items pertain to a number of expressions of pathological separation, including difficulty in differentiating from others (e.g., "I find that when I get emotionally too close to someone, I sometimes feel that I have lost a part of who I am"), splitting (e.g., "I find that I really vacillate between really liking myself and really disliking myself"), and relationship issues associated with separation-individuation disturbances (e.g., "I am tempted to try to control other people in order to keep them close to me"). Factor analytic examination of this questionnaire revealed the presence of one internally consistent factor (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Lapsley et al., 2001). In the present study, all 39 items of this scale also coalesced around a single factor. Hence, an overall scale score was computed with higher scores reflecting greater pathology in terms of the separation-individuation process. Reliability and validity of the scale has been previously demonstrated (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Dolan et al., 1992; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Parental separation anxiety. Parents' emotions associated with their children's increasing independence and imminent leave-taking were assessed with the 35-item Parents of Adolescents Separation Anxiety Scale (PASAS; Hock et al., 2001), which has two subscales: Anxiety About Distancing (AAD) and Comfort with Secure Base Role (CSBR). Sample items are: "I feel sad when I realize my teenager no longer likes to do the things that we used to enjoy doing

together" (AAD) and "I feel good knowing that my teenager feels that s/he can call on me" (CSBR). Although the PASAS was originally designed to measure feelings about separation in parents of adolescents, this scale has also been used in samples of parents of freshman and senior college students (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Hock et al., 2001). As parents in our sample were asked to report about their emerging adult children (ranging in age from 21 to 26 years), some slight adaptations were made to this scale. For instance, the word teenager was replaced by son/daughter throughout the whole questionnaire and some of the items were rephrased in the future or past tense depending on the emerging adult's residential status (e.g., "It will be a sense of relief for me when my son/daughter moves out of the house permanently"—"It was a sense of relief for me when my son/daughter moved out of the house permanently"). As such, items became of relevance for parents of all emerging adults, even when their child was already married and/or had left the parental household. Furthermore, two items pertaining to the transition to college were dropped from the questionnaire, as they are irrelevant to parents of emerging adults who finished their education after high school (i.e., 25% of our sample). Information about psychometric properties and validity of the PASAS were provided by Hock et al. (2001). Cronbach's alpha for the AAD subscale in this study was .82 for mothers and .88 for fathers. For the CSBR subscale Cronbach's alpha was .76 for mothers and .75 for fathers.

Dependency-oriented psychological control. Emerging adults were administered the 8-item Dependency-oriented Psychological Control (DPC) subscale from the Dependency-oriented and Achievement-oriented Psychological Control Scale (DAPCS; Soenens et al., 2010). Emerging adults completed the items separately for their mother and father. A sample item reads: "My mother/father blames me that I no longer want to do things that we used to enjoy". Information about the psychometrics of this scale is presented in Soenens et al. (2010). The 8 items showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > .80$) and the scale was externally validated by relating it to measures of parenting style and family climate. In this study Cronbach's alpha was .87 for maternal ratings and .80 for paternal ratings.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Preliminary analyses. Means and standard deviations of all study variables (i.e., AAD, CSBR, DPC, and PATHSEP) are presented in Table 1. Prior to examining our hypothesized relationships, we explored the effects of a number of relevant background characteristics on our study variables to decide which variables should be controlled for in our main analyses. It concerns the following background variables: family structure (i.e., intact vs. nonintact), number of siblings, emerging adults' gender, age, level of education (i.e., high vs. low), and relationship status (i.e., having a partner or not). We performed a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with the background variables as independent variables and the study variables as dependent variables. Significant multivariate effects emerged for number of siblings, $F(7, 207) = 5.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$, emerging adults' gender, $F(7, 207) = 2.83$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$, and relationship status, $F(7, 207) = 2.31$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Follow-up univariate analyses were conducted and results are displayed in Table 2. Number of siblings had a significant effect on maternal and paternal AAD and on maternal CSBR. The more siblings emerging adults have, the lower both parents' scores on AAD and the lower mothers' scores on CSBR. Second, emerging adults' gender had a significant effect on maternal AAD and on both maternal and paternal CSBR, with mothers expressing more AAD and both parents expressing more CSBR towards their daughters than towards their sons. Third, relationship status had a significant effect on PATHSEP. Emerging adults involved in a romantic relationship scored significantly lower on PATHSEP compared with their single peers. Given that number of siblings, emerging adults' gender, and relationship status, were significantly related to the study variables, we controlled for the effects of these background variables in all subsequent analyses.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Study Variables (N = 232)

Measure	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
AAD								
1. Mother report	2.31	.52						
2. Father report	2.25	.46	.46***					
CSBR								
3. Mother report	3.81	.43	.23**	.16*				
4. Father report	3.71	.38	.09	.16*	.22**			
DPC								
5. EA about Mother	1.88	.59	.21**	.20**	.09	–.01		
6. EA about Father	1.67	.48	.14*	.18**	.01	– .10	.52***	
PATHSEP								
7. EA report	2.20	.42	.28***	.21**	–.04	.07	.42***	.38***

Note: All measures were scored on 5-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).
AAD = Anxiety About Distancing, CSBR = Comfort with Secure Base Role, DPC = Dependency-oriented Psychological Control, EA = Emerging Adult, PATHSEP = Pathological Separation.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Univariate Follow-up Analyses of Background Variables with a Significant Multivariate Effect on the Study Variables

	Siblings	EA's Gender				Relationship Status				$F_{Siblings}$		$F_{EA's\ Gender}$		$F_{Relationship\ Status}$	
		Male		Female		No Partner		Partner		*F* (1, 213)	η^2	*F* (1, 213)	η^2	*F* (1, 213)	η^2
	B	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*						
AAD															
Mother report	–.14	2.17	.06	2.47	.08	2.35	.08	2.29	.06	11.85***	.05	8.64***	.04	.42	.00
Father report	–.12	2.19	.06	2.32	.07	2.29	.07	2.23	.05	21.11***	.09	2.35	.01	.62	.00
CSBR															
Mother report	–.16	3.76	.05	3.92	.06	3.85	.06	3.83	.05	14.86***	.07	3.99*	.02	.05	.00
Father report	–.03	3.65	.05	3.84	.06	3.72	.06	3.77	.04	1.25	.01	6.88**	.03	.44	.00
DPC															
EA about Mother	–.02	1.96	.07	1.83	.09	2.00	.09	1.78	.07	.16	.00	1.30	.00	3.52	.02
EA about Father	.03	1.73	.06	1.62	.08	1.65	.08	1.69	.06	.68	.00	1.34	.00	.18	.00
PATHSEP															
EA report	–.01	2.30	.05	2.30	.06	2.42	.07	2.18	.05	.21	.00	.00	.00	9.12**	.04

Note: All measures were scored on 5-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).
AAD = Anxiety About Distancing, CSBR = Comfort with Secure Base Role, DPC = Dependency-oriented Psychological Control, EA = Emerging Adult, PATHSEP = Pathological Separation.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In addition, to examine whether the parenting variables in this study differ across parental gender, we conducted a repeated measures MANOVA with parent gender as a within-subjects variable and with AAD, CSBR, and DPC as dependent variables. A significant multivariate effect emerged for parent gender, $F(3, 229) = 14.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$. Univariate follow-up analyses indicated significant effects of parental gender on CSBR ($F(1, 231) = 8.86$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$) and DPC ($F(1, 231) = 35.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$). Mothers scored higher on CSBR ($M = 3.81$, $SD = .03$) and DPC ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .04$) in comparison with fathers ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .03$ and $M = 1.67$, $SD = .03$, respectively).

Residential status and study variables. To examine the main effect of emerging adults' residential status (i.e., with parents, semi-independent, independent) on the study variables, we conducted a MANCOVA. Emerging adults' residential status and significant background variables were entered in the model as independent variables and the study variables were treated as dependent variables. Results indicated that emerging adults' residential status had no significant multivariate effect on the study variables, $F(14, 440) = 1.07$, *ns*. One significant univariate effect appeared for residential status on fathers' use of DPC. However, as this was an isolated finding and as the multivariate effect of residential status was not significant, this result was not further interpreted.

Structural Analysis

Correlational analysis. Correlations among all study variables are presented in Table 1. Mothers' and fathers' feelings of anxiety associated with emerging adults' distancing (AAD) were highly positively correlated. Furthermore, for both mothers and fathers, AAD was positively related to satisfaction with being an ongoing source of support and guidance for the emerging adult child (CSBR). Parental AAD was significantly related in expected ways to perceived dependency-oriented psychological controlling parenting (DPC). Conversely, parents' CSBR was unrelated to DPC. Maternal and paternal ratings of DPC were highly correlated. Emerging adults' pathology of the separation-individuation process (PATHSEP) was positively related to

both mothers' and fathers' AAD, but was unrelated to parents' CSBR. Finally, as expected, PATHSEP was significantly associated with both maternal and paternal ratings of DPC.

Structural equation modeling. We used structural equation modeling with latent variables to address the primary hypotheses in this study. First, we examined direct effects of parental AAD and CSBR on emerging adults' PATHSEP. Second, we estimated the hypothesized mediation model, with DPC as an intervening variable between AAD/CSBR and PATHSEP. Third, the moderating role of emerging adults' residential status was examined both in the direct effects model and in the model with DPC as an intervening variable. Models were estimated separately for mothers and fathers in Lisrel 8.71 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Emerging adults' gender, number of siblings and relationship status were entered as control variables in all models by allowing paths to each of the model constructs.

Parental separation anxiety, comfort with secure base role, dependency-oriented psychological control, and pathological separation-individuation were modeled as latent variables. Except for the control variables (which were represented by a single indicator variable), all four latent constructs were represented by a set of three parcels consisting of a random selection of their respective scale items. The same parceling procedure was used to represent maternal and paternal constructs. Although the utility and efficacy of parceling can be debated, this technique was deemed appropriate as our focus was on relations between latent variables and parcels were only used to build a measurement model. Moreover, aggregating items into parcels has psychometric merits as well as advantages for model estimation (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002).

Data screening of the observed indicator variables (i.e., the parcels) indicated that assumptions of normality were violated both in terms of skweness and kurtosis at the multivariate level, $\chi^2(2, N = 232) = 283.61$, $p < .001$. As a result, we used the asymptotic covariance matrix as input in all subsequent analyses and considered the Satorra-Bentler Scaled chi-square (SBS-χ^2; Satorra

& Bentler, 1994) to evaluate model fit (N = 232 for all models tested). Additionally, the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were inspected to evaluate model goodness of fit. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), combined cutoff values close to .06 for RMSEA and .09 for SRMR indicate good model fit. CFI-values of .90 or higher reflect acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990).

In a first step, we investigated the measurement model with 15 observed indicator variables and 7 latent variables (i.e., 3 control variables and 4 substantive latent factors) for mothers and fathers separately. Both the measurement model for mothers and fathers showed good fit: SBS-$\chi^2(72)$ = 109.33, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05 and SBS-$\chi^2(72)$ = 127.96, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06, respectively. Factor loadings of the indicator variables on their respective latent factors were moderate to high—ranging from .64 to.88 for the maternal data (M = .81) and ranging between .57 and .87 for the paternal data (M = .78)—and significant (p < .001). In sum, reliable measurement models were obtained.

Next, we tested a set of structural models to investigate the main hypotheses of this study. In a first model, AAD and CSBR were simultaneously entered as predictors of PATHSEP. Results of the maternal model, SBS-$\chi^2(42)$ = 67.32, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05, showed that whereas AAD was positively related to PATHSEP (β = .37; p < .001), the path from CSBR to PATHSEP was not significant (β = –.11; *ns*). Virtually similar results were obtained in the paternal model, SBS-$\chi^2(42)$ = 94.38, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07, with AAD relating positively to PATHSEP (ß = .25; p < .001), and with CSBR being unrelated to PATHSEP (β = .02; *ns*). Although AAD and CSBR were positively interrelated in the maternal data (r = .25, p < .01), they were unrelated in the paternal data (r = .11, *ns*).

In the next set of models we addressed the intervening role of DPC in the relation between the parent characteristics (i.e., AAD and CSBR) and emerging adults' PATHSEP. In a first model, the parent characteristics were only indirectly

related to PATHSEP through DPC. Estimation of this full mediation model yielded good fit for the maternal data, SBS-$\chi^2(74) = 122.09$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06. Results showed that whereas AAD was positively related to DPC ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$), CSBR was not ($\beta = .08$, *ns*). DPC was in turn related to PATHSEP in the hypothesized direction ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect from maternal AAD to emerging adults' PATHSEP through DPC was significant, as indicated by a Sobel (1982) test for indirect relations ($z = 2.66$, $p < .01$). Bootstrap results, using Preacher and Hayes (2008) methodology for indirect effects based on 5000 bootstrap resamples, confirmed the Sobel test with a bootstrapped 95% confidence interval (CI) around the indirect effect not containing zero ($b = .06$; CI = .02–.12). Because maternal AAD had an initial positive association with PATHSEP, a second model was tested to examine whether this path would remain significant or would be reduced to nonsignificance after including DPC as a mediator in the model. Adding a direct path from AAD to PATHSEP to the model (depicted in Fig. 1A), significantly improved the model fit, ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 14.97$, $p < .001$, and although this path was reduced to $\beta = .24$ (i.e., a reduction of 35%) it remained significant. Because the indirect effect of AAD on PATHSEP also remained significant in this model ($z = 2.55$, $p < .05$), it can be concluded that the relationship between maternal AAD and PATHEP is partially, rather than fully, mediated by DPC.

Estimating the mediation model on the paternal data (see Fig. 1B) yielded a good model fit SBS-$\chi^2(74) = 132.38$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. Whereas AAD was positively related to DPC ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), CSBR was unrelated to DPC ($\beta = .16$, *ns*). DPC was in turn positively associated with PATHSEP ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$). Analogously to the results of the maternal model, paternal AAD was indirectly related to emerging adults' PATHSEP through DPC ($z = 2.74$, $p < .01$). Bootstrapping corroborated these results ($b = .08$; 95% bootstrap CI = .03–.15). Because parental AAD initially showed a direct effect on PATHSEP, further mediation analyses were performed. Adding a direct path from AAD to PATHSEP improved model fit ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 8.96$, $p < .01$.

(A) Mother model – partial mediation

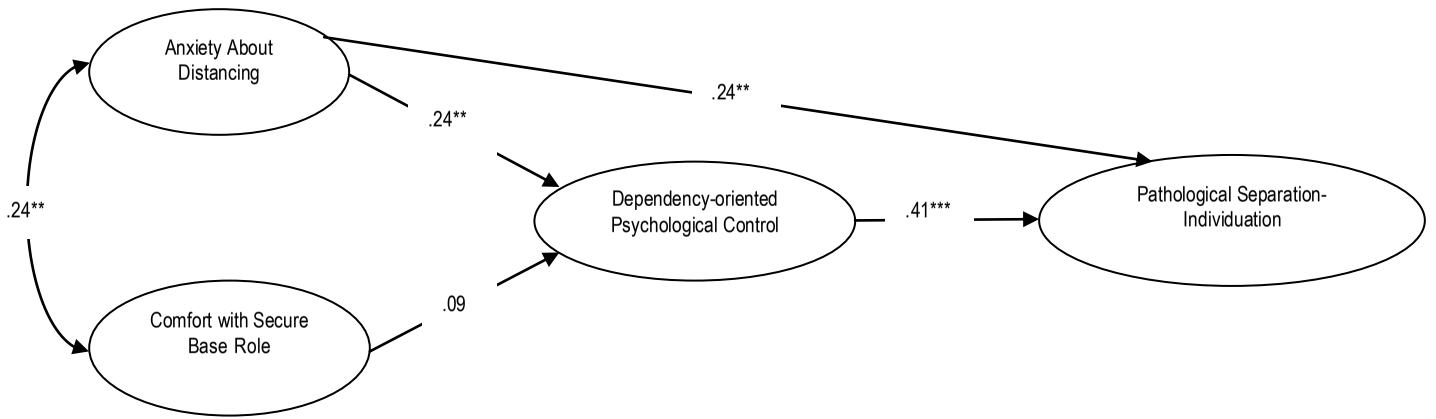

Figure 1A. Structural model of the relationships between parental separation anxiety, comfort with secure base role, dependency-oriented psychological control and emerging adult's pathology of the separation-individuation process, separately for (A) the maternal and (B) the paternal data. For clarity of presentation the effects of the control variables (age, emerging adults' gender, number of siblings, and relationships status) are not shown. Fit mother model: SBS-$\chi^2(73) = 112.06$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05. Fit father model: SBS-$\chi^2(74) = 132.38$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

(B) Father model – full mediation

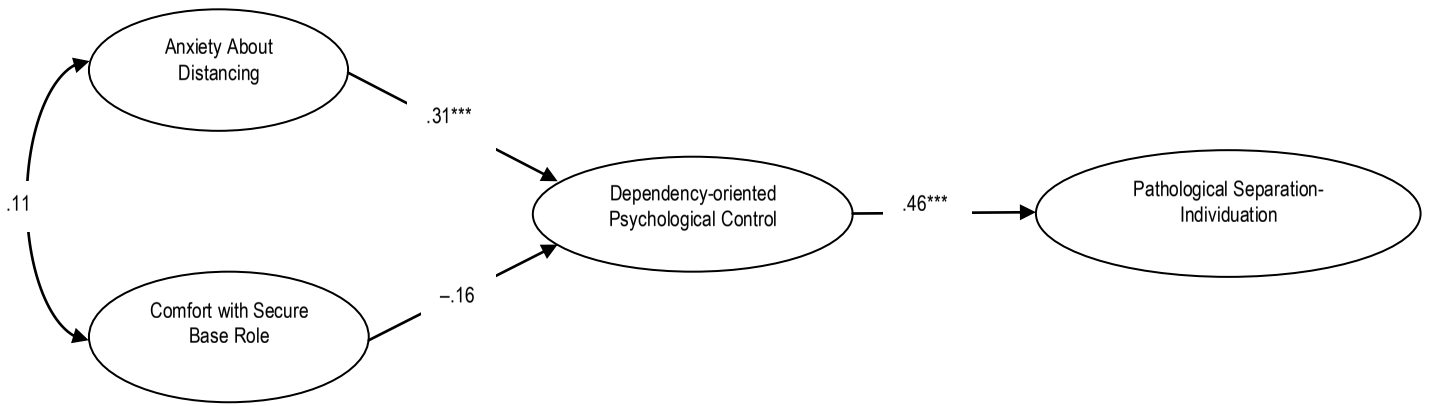

Figure 1B. Structural model of the relationships between parental separation anxiety, comfort with secure base role, dependency-oriented psychological control and emerging adult's pathology of the separation-individuation process, separately for (A) the maternal and (B) the paternal data. For clarity of presentation the effects of the control variables (age, emerging adults' gender, number of siblings, and relationships status) are not shown. Fit mother model: SBS-$\chi^2(73) = 112.06$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05. Fit father model: SBS-$\chi^2(74) = 132.38$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

However, as this path was reduced to nonsignificance (β = .13, *ns*) in the mediation model (i.e., a reduction of 48%), it could be concluded that the relationship between paternal AAD and PATHSEP was fully mediated by DPC.

Finally, we performed multigroup analyses to examine the moderating role of emerging adults' residential status on both the model with direct effects from AAD and CSBR to PATHSEP and the model with DPC as an intervening variable. First, it was tested whether moderation would occur in the model with direct effects. These analyses revealed that the common fit of the maternal model—where all parameters were specified to be invariant across the three types of residential status—was good: SBS-$\chi^2(198) = 217.33$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04. Free estimation of the parameters of all structural paths in the model (i.e., paths from both AAD and CSBR to PATHSEP and correlation between AAD and CSBR) did not significantly improve the common fit of the model: ΔSBS-$\chi^2(6) = 3.02$, *ns*. As the results of this multivariate test were nonsignificant, no further univariate analyses were conducted in which each of the paths is freed separately. Hence, it can be concluded that type of residential status did not moderate the direct effects of AAD and CSBR on PATHSEP. Conversely, the common goodness of fit of the paternal model, SBS-$\chi^2(198) = 293.41$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .08, did improve significantly when all structural paths were estimated freely across the three residential statuses: ΔSBS-$\chi^2(6) = 15.78$, $p < .05$. Follow-up univariate testing revealed that the free estimation of only one parameter improved model fit (ΔSBS-$\chi^2(2) = 10.29$, $p < .01$), that is, the correlation between AAD and CSBR. In the co-resident group the correlation between AAD and CSBR was $r = .15$ (*ns*), in the semi-independent group the correlation was $r = .30$ ($p < .01$), and in the independent group the correlation was $r = .04$ (*ns*).

Next, multigroup analyses were also performed to examine whether emerging adults' type of residential status moderates the structural paths in the estimated mediation models. The partial mediation model for the maternal data was found to be invariant across the three residential statuses: SBS-$\chi^2(205) = 253.35$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06, as free estimation of the structural paths in the

model did not significantly improve model fit (ΔSBS-$\chi^2(10) = 6.76$, *ns*. Similarly, estimation of a restricted paternal full mediation model, where all parameters are set equal across emerging adults' types of residential status, showed good model fit: SBS-$\chi^2(206) = 281.62$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .07, and freeing the parameters of the structural paths across the three groups did not improve model fit: ΔSBS-$\chi^2(8) = 11.91$, *ns*. As a result, it could be concluded that emerging adults' type of residential status does not moderate the hypothesized paths in both the maternal and paternal mediation models.

Discussion

Emerging adulthood is a critical turning point in the human life span, during which young people make the transition to adult life (Arnett, 2000). Throughout this period emerging adults move from a dependent status to a more independent status. For instance, they learn to take responsibility for their own actions, become financially independent from parents, gain self-sufficiency, and move out of the parental household. This growing need for independence and self-regulation additionally requires a transformation of the parent-child relationship (Tanner, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising that issues of closeness versus distance in parent-child relationships strongly revive during this life stage and may, at least for some emerging adults, give rise to a pathological resolution of the developmental task of separation-individuation. The present study examined parental separation anxiety and dependency-oriented psychological control as antecedents of emerging adults' pathology of the separation-individuation process. Several interesting findings emerged.

Parental Separation Anxiety

When children grow up to become adults, some parents may have difficulties to accept that childlike dependencies on parents are relinquished and regulation of children's behavior is gradually transferred from parents to children themselves. It was expected that a separation-anxious parental orientation could translate in emerging adults' difficulties to cope with the separation-individuation

process, as manifested in pathological separation. In line with this expectation, it was found that parents' feelings of separation-related loss and distress relate to an unhealthy resolution of the process to achieve an independent status. These findings contribute to earlier findings showing that parental AAD is related to problems in identity development (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002) and to lower general well-being in adolescents (Soenens et al., 2006).

Parental comfort with being a secure base was, by contrast, unrelated to pathological separation-individuation. Hence, contrary to previous research with adolescents in which parental CSBR was found to be an adaptive parental orientation (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Hock et al., 2001; Soenens et al., 2006), it cannot be concluded that being an ongoing source of parental support is a protective factor against pathology of the separation-individuation process in emerging adulthood. Moreover, although parents' anxiety about distancing and comfort with secure base role have been strongly related in research with adolescents, this correlation was relatively small in the current study with emerging adults and was even not significant for fathers. One possible explanation for the stronger differentiation between AAD and CSBR at a later age—and for fathers of emerging adults in particular—is that separation anxiety becomes less of an expression of genuine parental involvement and concern. Instead, as emerging adults' strivings for independence become more normative and age-appropriate, parental anxiety about distancing may increasingly become a self-concerned parental orientation which has nothing to do with positive involvement in their children's development.

In sum, both maternal and paternal separation anxiety are related to emerging adults' pathology of the separation-individuation process. On the basis of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973) and object-relations theory (Mahler, 1963), it could be argued that parents' response to their children's development during the separation-individuation process is a function of parents' own experiences with their attachment figures during childhood. Parents' own developmental history is thus likely to affect the way in which parents respond to separation events and to their children's increasing independence in particular (Bloom-

Feshbach & Bloom-Feshbach, 1987). In line with these ideas, empirical research by Hock et al. (2001) has found that parents having insecure attachment representations particularly experience high levels of parental separation anxiety. These findings possibly suggest a mechanism of intergenerational transmission where parents respond with feelings of sadness and loss to their child's separation-individuation process because of unresolved issues with their own attachment and separation experiences. Future research that takes into account parents' personal history with separation-individuation and attachment is needed to more fully address the possibility of intergenerational transmission of separation-individuation pathology.

Dependency-Oriented Psychological Control as a Mediator

The relationship between parental separation anxiety and emerging adults' pathology of the separation-individuation process was mediated by dependency-oriented psychological control. In line with our expectations and results of previous studies (e.g., Soenens et al., 2010), this finding demonstrates that parents who are highly anxious about their child's distancing use more controlling parenting tactics and, more specifically, engage in manipulative strategies to keep their emerging adult child emotionally and physically close to them. The subsequent relation between dependency-oriented psychological control and emerging adults' pathological separation-individuation is consistent with the notion that overprotective parents who leave their child no space for individuality undermine the development of healthy separation-individuation (Barber, 1996; Wood, 2006).

Although the initial relation between parental separation anxiety and pathological separation-individuation was reduced to nonsignificance after taking into account the role of dependency-oriented psychological control in the paternal model (suggesting full mediation), this direct path remained significant in the maternal model (suggesting partial mediation). These findings suggest that fathers' separation anxiety needs to be explicitly communicated through parenting (i.e., pressuring the child to remain dependent on the parent) to become

a risk factor for emerging adults' pathological separation-individuation. In contrast, maternal separation anxiety seems to affect emerging adults' pathological separation in a direct fashion, suggesting that maternal separation anxiety may represent a more visible and salient attitude, reflected in many of the mother's behaviors and communications. Alternatively, other mediators (such as attachment style) may additionally explain part of the effect of maternal separation anxiety on emerging adults' pathology of the separation-individuation process.

Notwithstanding this minor difference between maternal and paternal findings, the consistency of the findings across the maternal and paternal data was remarkable. This consistency is surprising, because separation anxiety and promotion of dependency are often considered as typical maternal characteristics. As such, mothers are particularly thought to be involved in disturbances of the process of separation-individuation. Nevertheless, results of this study have shown that when fathers feel anxious about their child's distancing and pressure the child to stay within close proximity, they too seem to contribute to emerging adults' separation-individuation pathology.

In this study, like in many studies on pathological separation, we focused primarily on dependency and on parental pressure to be dependent. Nevertheless, as healthy separation-individuation requires an optimal balance between connectedness and independence (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989), disturbances could also be converted in an excessive urge for independence. On the basis of the recent work by Soenens et al. (2010) on domain-specific expressions of psychological control, we argue that a different type of parental pressure may elicit such excessive independency longings, that is, achievement-oriented psychological control. Contrary to dependency-oriented psychological control, parents using this type of intrusive parenting encourage independence and individual achievement in a controlling and pressuring manner. It would be interesting for future studies to examine whether these two types of pathology of the separation-individuation process can actually be distinguished and whether they are differentially associated with unique

parenting antecedents.

Emerging Adults' Residential Status

The residential statuses of emerging adults are typically very diverse, as this is a highly unstable life stage where young people get the chance to try out a lot of possibilities (Arnett, 2000). For instance, some emerging adults still reside in the parental home, whereas others have already established an independent household. As previous studies have suggested that the separation-individuation process might be hampered when the emerging adult co-resides with his/her parents (Flanagan et al., 1993; White & Rogers, 1997), it was deemed important to take into account the role of emerging adults' residential status in this study. On the basis of a simplistic and literal understanding of the "separation" concept, leaving-taking from the parental home could be viewed as a crucial step for healthy resolution of the separation-individuation process. However residential status was not related to pathology of the separation-individuation process, nor to parental anxiety about their child's distancing, nor to the use of dependency-oriented controlling parenting strategies. Hence, these results plead against a literal interpretation of separation as physical disengagement from parents and instead support a view on separation as intrapsychic process (Blos, 1967, 1979; Mahler, 1963). Separation is about redefining the sense of self, and about knowing where I stop and you begin (Levy-Warren, 1999). Although physical distancing from the family by moving out of the parental home may be an outward manifestation of the inner process of separation, it is not the core element of this process. Moreover, it might be more important to pay attention to the reasons behind an emerging adult's residential status, instead of the residential status as such, when studying separation-individuation pathology (Kins et al., 2009). Young people who continue to live with their parents out of pressure rather than choice, for example because they lack financial resources or because they would feel guilty if they left home, might experience most disturbances. The same could hold true for emerging adults whom live independently for controlled reasons (e.g., they were forced to leave) rather than

for autonomous reasons (e.g., because they like it or find this personally important).

Further, emerging adults' residential status did not moderate associations between parental separation anxiety, parenting, and separation-individuation pathology. This suggests that, irrespective of residential status, these parental antecedents may contribute to pathology of the separation-individuation process. Hence, even when emerging adults have left the parental home and are not exposed to parental influences on a daily basis anymore, parents who are highly anxious about their child's distancing (and their resulting dependency-oriented parenting style) seem to affect the child's coping with separation-individuation issues. In line with previous research of Kins et al. (2009), these results indicate that the objective residential status is relatively less relevant in the prediction of separation-individuation and adjustment compared to family dynamics and subsequent modes of personal functioning within each type of residential status. Clinicians working with emerging adults and their families would do well to take into account these family dynamics in order to prevent separation-individuation pathology in emerging adulthood.

Limitations

Although this study is to our knowledge among the first to study hypothesized parental antecedents of separation-individuation pathology in emerging adulthood, some limitations are worth noting. First of all, although this study included emerging adults with substantial variability in gender, age, and residential status, this is not a representative sample. Therefore, it remains to be examined whether the structural relationships obtained in this sample can be generalized to a broader population of emerging adults and their parents. Moreover, as this is a self-selected sample the subjects included in our study may be relatively well-adjusted. Consequently, future research will have to indicate if our results can be replicated in clinical samples and particularly in samples of people suffering from disturbances in the separation-individuation.

Second, in this cross-sectional study we focused exclusively on the impact

of parents on children, thus adopting a unidirectional perspective on the association between parental characteristics and pathology of the separation-individuation process. As previous studies have indicated that characteristics of the child (e.g., health status) can affect parents' separation anxiety (Hock & Lutz, 1998), the effect of the child on the parent should be taken into consideration as well. Applied to the present study this would mean that parental feelings of separation anxiety and dependency-oriented psychological control will be reinforced when parents see that their child struggles with the resolution of the separation-individuation process and experiences difficulties to learn to stand alone as a self-sufficient person. It is possible that mothers are especially sensitive to this child-effect, as we found a somewhat stronger direct remaining association between separation anxiety and pathology of the separation-individuation process in the maternal data compared to the paternal data. Longitudinal research is needed to explore such reciprocal effects and to further unravel the complex interplay between parental separation anxiety and emerging adults' pathology of the separation-individuation process. In particular, the temporal precedence assumed in the mediation model of this cross-sectional study could be more appropriately tested with a longitudinal design. Moreover, as emerging adults are in the process of making commitments to new systems outside the family of origin (Tanner, 2006), it is unlikely that only the parent-child relationship would affect emerging adults' resolution of the separation-individuation process. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate in future studies how relationships with significant others (e.g., a romantic partner, good friend) additionally affect the separation-individuation process.

Third, given the homogeneous nature of the study sample, including exclusively Belgian emerging adults and their parents, the finding that emerging adults' objective residential status is less relevant in the prediction of separation-individuation pathology should be interpreted carefully. That is, Belgium is a small country (i.e., total surface area of 30.528 km² or 11.787 square miles) where everyone lives within driving distance. Hence, even when young people have an independent residential status, they generally live close to the parental

home. As such, leaving the parental home might be a less radical rupture from parental influences for Belgian emerging adults compared with young people from other countries. This could explain why parental characteristics and behaviors remain important antecedents of emerging adults' separation-individuation pathology even when one no longer lives in the parental home. Further research in countries where independent living implies a substantial geographical distance from the parental home, like the U.S. and Canada, is needed before it can be concluded that the role of emerging adults' objective residential status can be completely discarded in the prediction of pathology of separation-individuation.

Finally, this study starts from the idea that a gradual development towards more independence is normative when a child grows up to become adult. This assumption is typical for Western individualistic societies, where separateness from others is highly promoted. The interpretation of the separation-individuation process and what is considered as pathological might however be very different in more collectivistic cultures, where the priority of the group is emphasized over individual goals. In addition, the role of family process in the prediction of (pathology of) the separation-individuation process might be even more pronounced in these societies. Cross-cultural comparison studies are needed to help unravel these questions.

Conclusion

This study showed that parents' feelings of separation anxiety are related to a pathological way of dealing with the separation-individuation process among emerging adults. These feelings of threat and loss when confronted with the child's distancing appear to be transferred to the child through parental promotion of dependence in a pressuring fashion, even when emerging adults have left the parental home and no longer live with their parents.

Chapter 6

Separation anxiety in families with emerging adults[1]

In several developmental theories separation anxiety has been identified as an important feature of close interpersonal relationships. Most often, separation anxiety has been examined in the context of mother-child dyads in infancy. Increasingly, however, it is recognized that separation anxiety is also relevant in other relationships (e.g., the father-child relationship) and in later developmental periods (e.g., adolescence and emerging adulthood). The present study aimed to investigate separation anxiety at the family level in families with emerging adults. By using the social relations model, we aimed to determine the extent to which the actor, the partner, their specific relationships, and the family contribute to separation anxiety in dyadic family relationships. A total of 119 Belgian two-parent families with an emerging adult participated in a round-robin design, in which family members reported on their feelings of separation anxiety towards each other. Analyses confirmed that separation anxiety can be largely explained as a personality attribute and as a typical aspect of the mother-child dyad. However, findings indicate that separation anxiety is also characteristic of the father-mother marital relationship and of the family climate as a whole. Implications for the meaning of separation anxiety and clinical practice are discussed.

[1]Kins, E., Soenens, B., & Beyers, W. (2012). Separation anxiety in families with emerging adults. *Unpublished manuscript.*

Separation anxiety was described in early psychoanalytic writings as a basic human disposition referring to a concern about the loss or absence of significant others (Benedek, 1970; Bloom-Fesbach & Bloom-Fesbach, 1987; Freud, 1926). In several theories, including attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973) and object relations theory (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975), separation anxiety is considered a salient feature of close relationships. Possibly because these theories emphasized the role of separation anxiety in infancy and early interpersonal relationships, separation anxiety has been mainly studied in dyadic relationships and in the mother-child dyad in particular. The present study is among the first to investigate separation anxiety at the family level. For this purpose, we will rely on the social relations model. Moreover, it is examined in an older target group than is typically the case. That is, separation anxiety is studied in families of emerging adults. As this is a time when young people make the transition to adult life and become more independent from parents (Tanner, 2006), it is believed highly relevant to investigate separation anxiety in families of emerging adults.

Separation Anxiety in Family Relationships

Consistent with the central ideas of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973) and object relations theory (Mahler, et al., 1975), it has been argued that processes involved in parent-child separation are critical for an individual's psychosocial development. Difficulties in processes of separation, including separation anxiety, have been described most often in the context of the mother-child dyad. Also, historically the focus of attention in literature on separation anxiety has been on infants and young children (Hock, McBride, & Gnezda, 1989).

According to Bowlby (1973), separation anxiety is experienced by all living creatures in response to separation or a threat of separation from an attachment figure. From his ethological perspective on attachment, separation anxiety and associated separation behaviors in infancy are considered normative and adaptive for the survival of the individual and the species. Separation anxiety

typically starts to manifest at about 8 months, with a peak around 13 months, and a decrease from 30 months onwards. (see also Hock & Lutz, 1998). When separation anxiety is excessive and persists beyond infancy, this may signal deficiencies in the quality of the parent-child relationship (e.g., preoccupied attachment) and it may forecast separation anxiety disorder and poor adjustment and ill-being later in life (e.g., Bernstein & Borchardt, 1991; Brumariu & Kerns, 2010; Dallaire & Weinraub, 2005; Lavallee et al., 2011).

Increasingly, it is being argued that separation anxiety is relevant in later developmental periods as well. Separation-related concerns are likely to surface again when a child reaches the phase of adolescence and emerging adulthood and makes the transition from a dependent adolescent to an independent young adult. For instance, the imminent leave-taking from the parental home during emerging adulthood might be challenging as this is real-life separation experience (Bartle-Haring, Brucker, & Hock, 2002; Mayseless, Danieli, & Sharabany, 1996). It has been expected and found that how people cope with such separation experiences depends on their attachment representations (Bernier, Larose, & Whipple, 2005; Mayseless, et al., 1996). Experiences of separation, like leaving the parental home, may be stressful and thus activate the attachment system. These mental representations of attachment relationships that were built on the basis of experiences with significant others seem to affect the way in which an individual responds behaviorally and emotionally to separation events. That is, securely attached subjects appear to cope better with the home-leaving experience than the insecurely attached (Bernier et al., 2005; Mayseless et al., 1996).

Separation in the mother-child relationship has received a central focus of attention, as developmental theories have historically stressed the primacy of the mother's role in early infant caregiving. Although separation anxiety was studied predominantly in infants and young children, attachment theory can also provide a conceptual base for understanding mother's anxiety associated with separation experiences from the child. That is, feelings of separation anxiety activate an instinctive maternal tendency to provide protection and increased physical proximity to the child when confronted with a separation event or

impending danger (Bowlby, 1973). However it is not until the 1980s that maternal separation anxiety was thoroughly investigated. Maternal separation anxiety was conceptualized as an unpleasant emotional state tied to the separation experience characterized by expressions of worry, sadness, or guilt associated with mother-child separation (Hock et al., 1989; Hock & Schirtzinger, 1992). Maternal separation anxiety has been viewed as a rather stable personality disposition that is elicited in a mother's separation from her child (Hock et al., 1989). Several studies have provided evidence that separation anxiety is a rather traitlike aspect of the maternal personality rather than a type of state anxiety, with maternal separation anxiety for instance being found to be highly stable over time and across situations (DeMeis, Hock, & McBride, 1986; Hock et al. 1989). Maternal separation anxiety has also shown to be associated with negative self-representations (Hock & Schirtzinger, 1992), low self-esteem (McBride & Belsky, 1988), and depressive symptomatology (Hock & Schirtzinger, 1992; Hock, Schirtzinger, & Lutz, 1992). In laboratory settings, separation anxious mothers were found to demonstrate more intrusive and autonomy-restrictive behavior toward their child (Berger & Aber, 1986; Stifter, Coulehan, & Fish, 1993).

On the basis of attachment theory, it has been suggested that specific childhood experiences with the parents, stored in internal working models of relationships, contribute to the origin and intensity of maternal separation anxiety (Bowlby, 1973). Some evidence for this hypothesis was found as women with higher levels of separation anxiety reported more negative recollections of early parental caregiving, including rejection and discouragement of independence (Lutz & Hock, 1995). Although, maternal separation anxiety has been described as a personality attribute arising in part from individual experiences with the own parents during childhood, it was proposed that aspects of the child's functioning might also contribute to mothers' level of separation anxiety. McBride and Belsky (1988), for instance, found that mothers are more separation anxious when the child has a more difficult temperament.

Because separation anxiety has most often been studied in infants and young children and because separation concerns were considered to be rooted at least partly in the sociocultural mandates regarding the maternal role (Hock et al., 1989), it is logical that separation anxiety was mainly ascribed to mothers. Yet, to gain a fuller understanding of the dynamics of separation anxiety in families, research should also include fathers' concerns about separation. Fathers are more involved with childcare than they used to be and this might be particularly the case in later developmental periods, including adolescence and perhaps also emerging adulthood. Hence, it has been argued that separation anxiety would also be relevant in father-child relationships. Research has indeed supported this hypothesis as fathers were found to report separation anxiety to the same extent as mothers (Deater-Deckard, Scarr, McCartney, & Eisenberg, 1994; Hock & Lutz, 1998). Specifically in adolescence and emerging adulthood, some recent research suggests that separation anxiety relates to interpersonal functioning and well-being much in the same way in fathers as in mothers (e.g., Hock, Eberly, Bartle-Haring, Ellwanger, & Widaman, 2001; Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2011; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2006). However, there is also some research to suggest that the meaning and origins of separation anxiety may be different in men and women. An empirical study on separation anxiety in mothers and fathers, for instance, indicated that paternal separation anxiety was most influenced by their wives' separation anxiety, suggesting that the primary source of their concern may be situated at the level of the marital relationship. In contrast to fathers, maternal separation anxiety seemed to be embedded within beliefs about traditional role-related responsibilities and influenced by personality attributes, recollections of parental caregiving, and characteristics of the child (Hock & Lutz, 1998).

The Present Study

Given the increasing recognition of the relevance of separation anxiety beyond the mother-child dyad, the present study aimed to investigate separation anxiety at the level of the family as a whole. This aim was pursued in families of

emerging adults in the process of home leaving. Although research on separation anxiety in infants and early childhood is abundant, there are far more less studies on separation anxiety in older target populations (Hock et al., 2001). However, as this is a time when families face challenges with respect to separation-related issues, separation anxiety might be salient. Particularly, the imminent leave-taking from the parental home might trigger feelings of separation anxiety in both emerging adults (Seligman & Wuyek, 2007) and parents (Bartle-Haring, et al., 2002). In contrast with previous research, which focused primarily on one specific dyad in the family (e.g., the mother-child relationship), the present study investigates separation anxiety from a family systems perspective. This allows us to examine whether separation anxiety is characteristic of individuals, specific dyads, or the family as a whole (Cook & Kenny, 2004).

In addition, we compared families with co-residing emerging adults and families with emerging adults living away from the parental home. Mean-level differences of separation anxiety were evaluated as well as their patterns of individual, dyadic, and group level separation anxiety in family relationships. Research has suggested that the transformation towards a more adult-like parent-child relationship, reflecting increasing mutuality, is complicated when emerging adults continue to co-reside with their parents (Aquilino, 1997; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligini, 1993). These difficulties might be intertwined with feelings of separation anxiety. Therefore, it is possible that mean levels of separation anxiety in family relationships are higher when emerging adults still live in the parental home. Moreover, it was explored whether the family dynamics involved in separation anxiety are different when emerging adults co-reside with their parents or live away.

The Social Relations Model

We applied the social relations model (SRM; Cook, 1994; Kenny & La Voie, 1984) to investigate the family dynamics that determine separation anxiety in families of emerging adults during the home-leaving process. The SRM is rooted in family systems theory (Bowen, 1978), which emphasizes the

importance of regarding the family as an interacting system of individuals and relationships. Family systems theorists suggest that behavior or characteristics of an individual family member can affect the whole family as a system and the subsystems within the family, and the other way around. The SRM is a statistical model for studying interpersonal perception and behavior that takes into account this notion of interdependence of components within the family system. Hence, rather than focusing on one specific dyad in the family, the SRM treats the family as the unit of analysis and uses a round-robin design in which each family member reports on his or her relationship with the other participating family members (Cook, 2005).

According to the SRM, the relationship of one family member to another is a function of four systematic sources of variance: (a) an actor effect, (b) a partner effect, (c) a relationship effect, and (d) a family effect (Kashy & Kenny, 1990). An actor effect refers to a consistency in a person to show or report certain behavior across multiple relationships (e.g., a general tendency to feel separation anxious towards other people). A partner effect refers to the extent to which the characteristics of a particular partner consistently elicit certain thoughts, feelings or behavior from others (e.g., a general tendency to elicit feelings of separation anxiety in different family members). A relationship effect refers to the unique adjustment of one person to another within a specific relationship (e.g., separation anxiety expressed by the mother towards the child). Finally, the family effect refers to characteristics that are on average shared across family members (e.g., a separation anxious family climate).

The purpose of SRM is to isolate and measure these different sources of variance that affect interpersonal relationships. This approach allows us to attribute the variance between families with respect to separation anxiety across different family relationships to the effects of actor, partner, relationship, and family. For instance, at the individual level, the model can indicate whether separation anxiety in family relationships of emerging adults typically refers to a personality attribute of mothers (actor effect), or whether it is rather elicited by characteristics of certain family members (partner effect). At the dyadic level,

SRM effects can reveal whether separation anxiety is primarily or uniquely typical of the mother-child dyad—as is sometimes assumed in the literature—or whether separation anxiety is also a feature of other family relationships, including the father-child relationship and the marital relationship. At a group level, SRM effects might point to differences in mean family level of separation anxiety across families. In a second step, meaningful correlations among the SRM components, referring to the degree of individual and dyadic reciprocity, can be specified (Kashy & Kenny, 1990). Individual reciprocity (i.e., actor-partner reciprocity correlation) reflects the extent to which a family member who is generally separation anxious also elicits separation anxiety from other family members. Dyadic reciprocity (i.e., relationship reciprocity correlation) indicates the degree to which a family member, who experiences unique separation anxiety within a specific relationship, is also experienced by the partner within the same relationship as being separation anxious. Finally, using multigroup comparisons, we additionally explored if the SRM effects were possibly different in families with co-residing emerging adults in comparison to families where emerging adults live away from the parental home.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Our study sample comprised 119 intact Belgian families (i.e., both parents living together) with an emerging adult aged 24 to 26. We deliberately focused on emerging adults in their mid-twenties because we wanted to compare a group of emerging adults who live with their parents with a substantial group of emerging adults who live fully independently. Recent demographics indicated that it is not until the age of 25 that approximately half of the Belgian young men and women have left the parental home (Vettenburg, Elchardus, & Walgrave, 2007). Somewhat more than half of our sample (i.e., 61%) comprised families with an emerging adult living permanently in the parental home. The other 39% were families where the emerging adult lived independently, meaning that the child rarely or never stayed over in the parental home anymore. The average age

for the participating mothers and fathers was 51 years (*SD* = 3 years) and 53 years (*SD* = 4 years), respectively. Both parents had an average level of education of approximately 14 years. Emerging adults were on average 25 years old (*SD* = 11 months) and slightly more than half of them were male (i.e., 56%). Of the total sample, 65% were highly educated (i.e., post-secondary education). Only 10% were still students at the time of data gathering, whereas the majority (80%) was currently working. Over half (i.e., 56%) of the participating emerging adults were involved in a partner relationship. A comparison of the emerging adults in both types of residential statuses on these background variables revealed that emerging adults who lived in the parental home were significantly younger ($F(1,118) = 8.44$, $p < .01$), more often male ($\chi^2(1) = 5.01$, $p < .05$), and less often involved in a romantic relationship ($\chi^2(1) = 11.93$, $p < .001$) than their independently living peers.

The data for the present study were collected by undergraduate students who took part in a course on developmental psychology. Each student was asked to contact one family. Questionnaires were administered from the participating family members (i.e., both parents and the emerging adult) during a home visit. Data were collected using a round-robin design in which each family member reports on his/her behavior, perceptions or feelings toward the other participating family members (Kenny & La Voie, 1984). This procedure resulted in data on 6 family relationships. That is, the emerging adult reported on his/her separation anxiety towards both parents, and both parents evaluated their level of separation anxiety towards their emerging adult child, and spouse.

Measures

Separation anxiety was measured using a selection of items from the Anxiety About Distancing (AAD) subscale of the Parents of Adolescents Separation Anxiety Scale (PASAS; Hock et al., 2001). The PASAS is a measure that was initially developed to assess parents' emotions with their adolescent's increasing independence and imminent leave-taking. The AAD subscale reflects parents' feelings of discomfort or loss with their perceptions of their adolescent's

independence and increasing affiliation with others. We selected 17 items of this scale that could be administered in a round-robin design in families with emerging adults. Items were somewhat rephrased so that all participating family members could evaluate how separation anxious they were with respect to the other participating family members. A sample item in the emerging adult version of the questionnaire for example reads "I get upset when my mother/father takes the advice of others more seriously than my advice". The parent version includes items like "I would feel hurt if my child/my spouse takes his/her problems to someone else instead of me". As such, a score for each of the six dyadic relationships could be obtained. Each of the items is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). One of the items had to be reverse-coded such that high scores on this scale demonstrated more separation anxiety. Cronbach's alpha of the separation anxiety scale ranged between .83 and .89 in the different dyads.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations and correlations of the separation anxiety scores across each of the six family relationships in the total sample are presented in Table 1. Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations separately for families where emerging adults live in the parental home and for families where emerging adults live independently. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) indicated that separation anxiety scores differed only significantly in the mother-child relationship. That is, mothers reported on average more separation anxiety towards their emerging adult child, when the child still lived with the parents.

SRM Analysis

First, we performed an SRM analysis on the covariance matrix of the total sample. The purpose of the analysis was to explore the degree to which separation anxiety in each of the six assessed family relationship can be explained by characteristics of the actor, the partner, the relationship, or the

Table 1

Descriptives and Correlations of Separation Anxiety in the Six Dyads

	M	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. EA-Mother	2.02	.48					
2. Mother-EA	2.49	.61	.71***				
3. EA-Father	2.05	.47	.16	.20*			
4. Father-EA	2.40	.52	.08	.10	.53***		
5. Mother-Father	3.05	.47	.14	.35***	.17	.26**	
6. Father-Mother	3.02	.51	.02	.13	.13	.17	.64***

Note: EA = Emerging Adult
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of the Separation Anxiety Scores in Families where Emerging Adults Co-reside with Parents versus Families where Emerging Adults Live Independently

Relationship	Co-residing		Independently		$F(1,117)$	η^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
EA-Mother	2.00	.48	2.06	.48	.32	.002
EA-Father	2.03	.46	2.10	.49	.67	.005
Mother-EA	2.58	.61	2.35	.60	4.05*	.034
Mother-Father	3.04	.48	3.05	.45	.00	.000
Father-EA	2.45	.53	2.33	.50	1.37	.013
Father-Mother	3.05	.46	2.97	.58	.57	.004

Note: EA = Emerging Adult
* $p < .05$.

family as a group, by partitioning the variance in the relationship into these four components. The different variances were estimated simultaneously in Lisrel 8.72 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996), as SRM analysis is essentially a confirmatory factor analysis in which the SRM effects are the latent variables (see Cook, 1994; Kashy & Kenny, 1990).

In a three-person family round-robin design, we have six unidirectional measures of separation anxiety. These observed measures served as the indicators for the latent variables. The observed measures of relationships where a family member is the actor served as the indicator variables of that person's actor effect. Analogously, observed measures of relationships where a family member is the partner were indicators of the individual's partner effect. For the family effect, all six relationship measures were used as indicators. By contrast, no such multiple indicators were available for the latent variables that represent the six relationship effects. However, to identify relationship effects as separate from measurement error, at least two indicator variables are needed. To obtain two indicators, we worked with parcels in which the mean from half of the items of the separation anxiety scale were used as one indicator of each relationship and the mean from the other half of the items served as the second indicator. In this case no correlated errors are specified (see Cook, 1993, 1994).

In our measurement model, all factor loadings were fixed at 1.0 and factor variances were estimated. These variance estimates indicate whether separation anxiety in family relationships reflects actor, partner, relationship, and/or family effects. In principle, variances should always be positive. However in our estimated model, the variance of all three partner effects were slightly negative and nonsignificant (i.e., –.01). Therefore, the variances of the partner effects were fixed to zero. It was deemed acceptable to drop the partner effects from the model, as a chi-square difference test indicated that the fit of the model without the partner effects did not differ significantly from the model including these partner effects (ΔSBS-$\chi^2(1) = 1.33$, *ns*). According to Cook (1994), this means that these parameters are not important and that the tested models can be simplified by dropping them.

Reciprocity correlations were added to our model. Dyadic reciprocity correlations were estimated by correlating the relationships effects of the two individuals within the dyadic relationship. Individual reciprocity correlations were not estimated because partner effects were fixed to zero and reciprocity correlations are only interpretable when they are based on two effects whose variances differ significantly from zero (Cook, 1994). Figure 1 displays an overview of the SRM model that was finally estimated.

Data screening of the observed indicator variables (i.e., the parcels) indicated that assumptions of normality were violated both in terms of skewness and kurtosis, $\chi^2(2, N = 119) = 18.08$, $p < .001$. Therefore, we used the asymptotic covariance matrix as input and checked the SBS-χ^2 to evaluate model fit. In addition, we inspected the comparative fit index (CFI), the root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root-mean square residual (SRMR). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), combined cutoff values close to .06 for RMSEA and .09 for SRMR indicate good model fit. A CFI with values of .90 or higher reflects acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990). An evaluation of these goodness-of-fit statistics revealed that the fit of the SRM model was satisfactory: SBS-$\chi^2(53) = 76.85$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .07. Variance estimates for the SRM effects are presented in Table 3. Statistically significant variances indicate that effects of actors, relationships, and families are important for the level of separation anxiety experienced within family relationships. Figure 2 presents the relative contribution of these different SRM components to the variance in the level of separation anxiety experienced in a specific dyadic relationship. The total amount of variance explained by the different SRM components in the different family dyads ranged between 49% and 61%.

All actor effects were found to be significant, which indicates that there are substantial personal differences in how separation anxious individuals feel towards other family members in general. Some emerging adults, mothers, and fathers experience more separation anxiety towards all family members than other emerging adults, mothers, and fathers. Actor variance explained 22 to

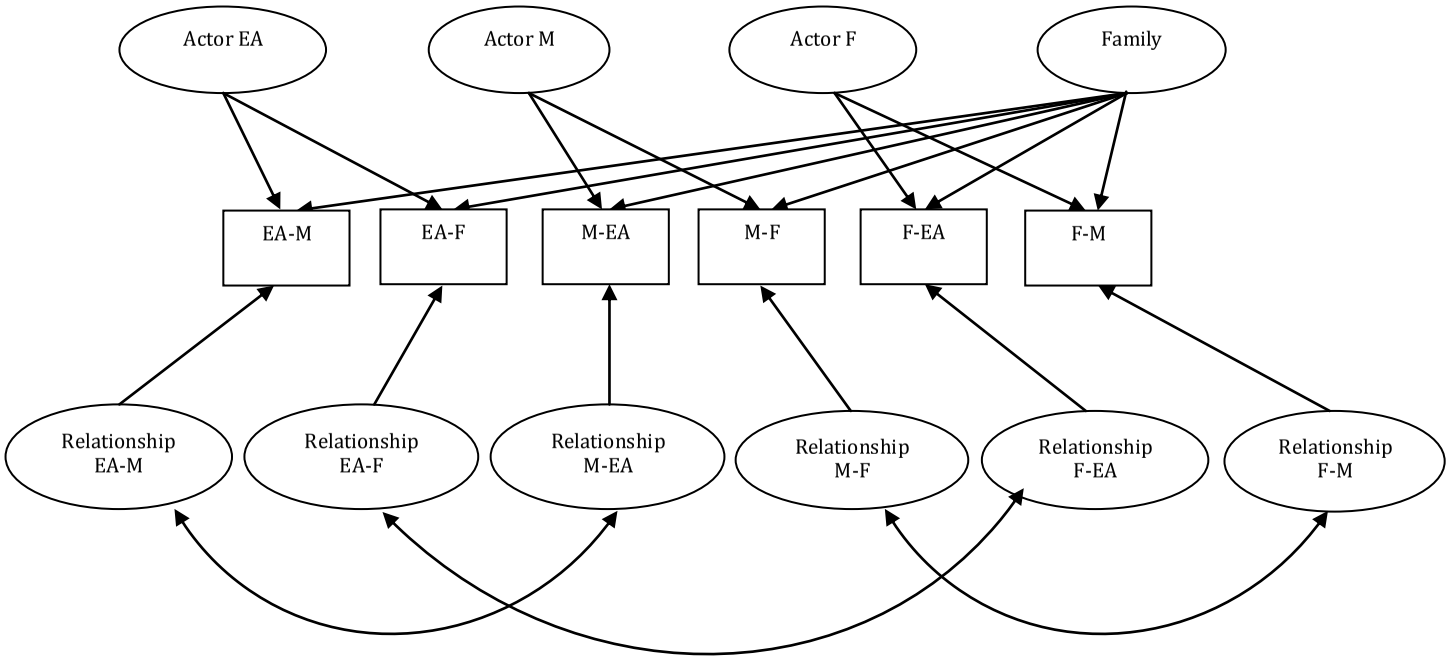

Figure 1. The SRM Model tested in Lisrel. EA = Emerging Adult; M = Mother; F = Father. Rectangles represent the observed measures (e.g., EA-M = separation anxiety the emerging adult experiences toward his/her mother); ellipses represent the latent Social Relations Model (SRM) components. Double-headed arrows represent dyadic reciprocity correlations. For reasons of clarity, the figure presents only one of the two indicators of the level of separation anxiety in a given family relationship; the other indicator (i.e., parcel) loads on the same latent factors in a similar matter.

Table 3

Social Relations Model Variance Estimates for Separation Anxiety

	Family member		
Source of	EA	Mother	Father
Actor	.13***	.11**	.12***
Partner	.00	.00	.00
Relationship			
EA		.17***	.04
Mother	.04*		.05*
Father	.02	.03	
Family	.03**		

Note: EA = Emerging Adult
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

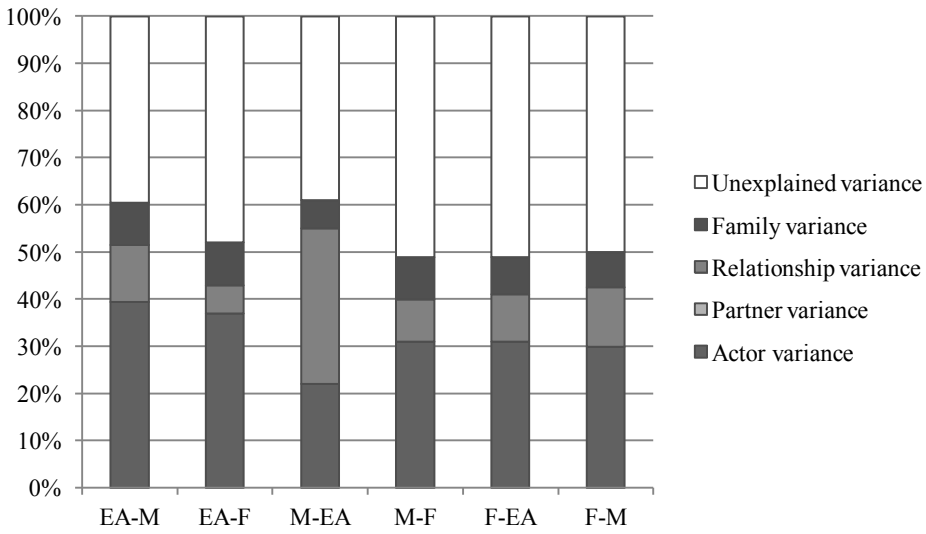

Figure 2. Percentage of Variance Explained by the Social Relations Model Components. EA = Emerging adult; M = Mother; F = Father

39.5% of the total variance in separation anxiety in the dyadic family relationships. Although the size of the actor variance was comparable for emerging adults, mothers, and fathers, actor effects contributed somewhat less in the level of separation anxiety experienced by parents compared to emerging adults.

As indicated before, partner effects could be dropped from the model. This means that how separation anxious an individual feels towards another family member does not depend on characteristics of a specific partner. Stated differently, all emerging adults elicit about the same amount of separation anxiety in family members and the same applies to mothers and fathers. Hence, partner effects explained 0% of the total variance in separation anxiety in the different family relationships.

Three relationship effects were detected, as three of the relationship variances were found to be significant: (a) a relationship effect for emerging adult feelings of separation anxiety towards the mother, (b) mother's separation anxiety towards the emerging adult, and (c) father's separation anxiety towards his spouse. This means that the extent to which an individual experiences separation anxiety in these specific family relationships is determined by factors unique to that relationship. The contribution of the relationship variance to the total variance in separation anxiety in all family relationships varied between 6% and 33%. Relationship effects contributed most to the mother-child relationship, indicating that separation anxiety is particularly characteristic in that specific relationship. Except for the father-child dyad ($r = .04$, $p < .01$), dyadic reciprocity correlations were nonsignificant. However, given that the relationship variances of the emerging adults' separation anxiety towards the father and the father's level of separation anxiety towards the emerging adult were not significant, the dyadic reciprocity is not further interpreted (Cook, 1994).

Finally, the significant family variance indicated that there are between-family differences in separation anxiety. Hence, differences in experienced level of separation anxiety in family relationships can also be explained by the mean family level of separation anxiety across families. The family effect explained

between 6% and 9% of the total variance in separation anxiety in the dyadic family relationships.

Multigroup Comparison

In a next step, we additionally examined whether SRM effects were different in families with emerging adults living permanently in the parental home (N = 73) compared to families where emerging adults live away from the parents (N = 46). A simultaneous multigroup analysis showed that the fit of a constrained model in which all variances were fixed in both groups (SBS-$\chi^2(131)$ = 158.58, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06) was not significantly worse than the fit of a model were all variances were estimated freely in the two groups of families (SBS-$\chi^2(106)$ = 130.03, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06); ΔSBS-$\chi^2(25)$ = 28.63, *ns*. As a result, it should be concluded that the SRM components that explain the variance in separation anxiety in families of emerging adults are not significantly different depending on the residential status of the emerging adult.

Discussion

Separation anxiety is often considered as a relationship feature that is particularly salient for the mother-child dyad in infancy and early childhood (Bowbly, 1973; Mahler et al., 1975). The present study aimed to broaden this perspective, first, by examining separation anxiety in emerging adulthood, a time when both parents and children face challenges that focus on separation-related issues (Aquilino, 2006; Tanner, 2006). Second, instead of concentrating solely on the mother-child relationship, separation anxiety was investigated at the family level. This approach allowed us to clarify the family dynamics that determine separation anxiety in dyadic family relationships (Cook & Kenny, 2004). The results of the present study indicate that separation anxiety is indeed to some extent a typical feature of the mother-child relationship; however other dynamics contributed to the level of experienced separation anxiety as well.

Separation anxiety in family relationships was found to differ considerably depending on characteristics of the actor. This means that some

family members are in general more separation anxious in family relationships in comparison to other family members. Such individual differences in experienced separation anxiety support the notion that separation anxiety is a relatively stable personality disposition. A couple of previous studies suggested that separation anxiety was mainly intertwined with personality in mothers and to a lesser extent in fathers (e.g., Hock & Lutz, 1998; Hock & Schirtzinger, 1992). Somewhat contrary to these findings, the results of the current study suggest that separation anxiety is a trait-like characteristic of mothers, fathers, and emerging adults alike. An important direction for future research is to examine more systematically the origins of these trait-like differences. It seems likely that early caregiving experiences and subsequent attachment representations as well as temperament factors contribute to the trait-like individual differences in separation anxiety observed in this study. Further, it seems likely that these actor effects, which reflect a general tendency to experience separation anxiety in family relationships, also generalize to close relationships outside the family (e.g., relationships with close friends, emerging adults' romantic relationships). Drawing on the ideas of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), it is possible that individuals' response to an actual separation or threat of loss is function of a general internal working model that is operating in each specific relationship. Furthermore, highly separation anxious individuals might be at risk for emotional ill-being as previous research with mothers revealed that separation anxiety was positively associated with low self-esteem and depressive symptomatology (Hock & Schirtzinger, 1992; Hock et al., 1992; McBride & Beslky, 1988). Hence, clinicians should be alert for characteristics of separation anxiety in individuals as these may have negative repercussions for personal and interpersonal adjustment.

Besides a personality attribute, separation anxiety was also found to be characteristic of specific family relationships. In line with traditional assumptions in literature on attachment and separation (Bowlby, 1969, 1973), separation anxiety was found to be a relatively unique feature of the mother-child dyad. Such relationship-specific effects were found in both directions of the mother-

child dyad (i.e., from child to mother and from mother to child). However, we found no evidence of reciprocal processes, suggesting that mothers and children do not reinforce each other in their feelings of separation anxiety towards one another. The relationship-effect also contributed a significantly larger portion of variance in the mother-child relationship (i.e., 33%) than in the child-mother relationship (i.e., 12%), which indicates that separation anxiety is particularly a unique component in the relationship a mother has with her child. These results provide support for the fact that mother's instinctive tendency to protect her child is inclined to result in feelings of anxiety when confronted with an actual separation or threat of separation from the child, as postulated by Bowlby (1969, 1973).

Although separation anxiety has been mainly investigated in parent-child relationships, the results of the present study indicate that feelings of separation anxiety can be also characteristic in partner relationships as we found a significant relationship effect for the father-mother relationship. This relationship effect signifies that the father's feelings of separation anxiety towards his spouse are determined by factors unique to that relationship. The fact that concerns about loss and absence are typically directed from fathers to mothers instead of the other way are rather counterintuitive with gender stereotypes about romantic relationships. Future research on romantic relationships should further explore males' feelings of separation anxiety towards their partner.

Finally, a small family effect was found to contribute to separation anxiety in relationships in families with emerging adults. This means that differences in family characteristics affect the extent to which separation anxiety is experienced towards other family members. Hence, some families may be characterized by a separation anxious family climate, where family members feel generally more separation anxious towards one another than in other families.

Taken together, these results indicate that, at least in the context of families with emerging adults, feelings of separation anxiety are determined by personality attributes, specific relationships and characteristics of the family as a whole. No partner effects were found, which means that feelings of separation

anxiety are not affected by characteristics of a partner. These results are somewhat contrary to previous research, which indicated that maternal separation anxiety in infancy is determined by characteristics of the child, such as the child's temperament (Belsky & McBride, 1988).

Subsequently, we explored whether the family dynamics that determine separation anxiety in family relationships are different in families where emerging adults co-reside with the parents in comparison to families where emerging adults live away. A multigroup analysis revealed that the SRM components that contribute to level of separation anxiety experienced in family relationships are not significantly different in families with co-residing emerging adults than in families where emerging adults live fully independently. This finding meshes with emerging evidence that dynamics of separation anxiety are still relevant even when the child has physically left the parental home. Kins et al. (2011), for instance, found that parental separation anxiety was related to psychologically controlling parenting and to subsequent disturbances in emerging adults' separation-individuation. This pattern of associations was not moderated by emerging adults' residential status, indicating that the intrapsychic and interpersonal ramifications of separation anxiety continue to exist after emerging adults have separated behaviorally from their parents.

By obtaining a clearer understanding of the different dynamics that contribute to separation anxiety in families of emerging adults, the results of the present study provide valuable information for clinical practice. Previous research has indicated that parental separation anxiety has negative implications for the child's development towards more independent and mature-like functioning (Bartle-Haring et al., 2002; Hock et al., 2001; Kins et al., 2011) and for the child's general well-being (Soenens et al., 2006). As a result, high levels of separation anxiety in parent-child relationships may warrant therapeutic intervention. Given that different processes were found to influence separation anxiety in family relationships, clinicians who work with emerging adults and their families should direct interventions at the individual, relational, and family level. Individual therapy sessions could for instance concentrate on the

adjustment of the general internal working model that triggers feelings of separation anxiety when confronted with actual or anticipated loss. Additional collective therapy sessions could focus on tackling separation anxiety within the mother-child dyad and in the family as a whole.

Limitations

Although this study revealed several interesting findings about the different family dynamics that contribute to separation anxiety, some limitations should be noted. First, the present findings are based on a homogeneous sample of intact two-parent families with emerging adult children. Future studies should investigate whether the present findings can be generalized to different types of families than the nuclear family as well as to families with younger children. Furthermore, as this is a self-selected sample, the levels of separation anxiety in family relationships may be relatively low. Hence, it remains to be examined whether our results can be replicated within a clinical context.

Second, findings of this study are based on a separation anxiety measure that was initially developed to measure parents' anxiety about their child's separation. Although we selected only the items that were appropriate to assess in a round-robin family design, future SRM family assessment using instruments that are more accustomed to measure separation anxiety within other family subsystems as well, could be warranted. It is for instance likely that the meaning of separation anxiety is different for children towards their parents and between spouses. As a result, other items might be needed in order to tap into separation anxiety within all the relationships embedded in the family. Future research should try to design a measure that can be completed by all family members and that captures the common features of separation anxiety within all family relationships.

Third, SRM analysis can be performed on families consisting of a minimum of three family members. However, the basic three-person SRM holds some analytical limitations given that there are insufficient degrees of freedom to estimate all SRM components (i.e., actor, partner, relationship, and family effect

as well as individual and dyadic reciprocity correlations). As an alternative, models can be simplified by dropping parameters that are believed to be unimportant (Cook, 1993). In the present study, we first ran the SRM without reciprocity correlations to identify if any of the four systematic sources of variance could be dropped from the model. Chi-square difference tests revealed that the small and nonsignificant partner effects could be dropped from the model as this did not significantly worsen model fit. By dropping these parameters, we were able to estimate the remaining SRM components without any problem. Hence, stipulating that some adjustments are made, the SRM can be used in family groups consisting of only three people. However, future research would do well to work with two-parent, two-child families. Not only does this resolve the problem of identification, but including another sibling in the dataset also allows for a more valid estimation of the family effect and for a comparison of horizontal (i.e., spouses and siblings) and vertical (i.e., parent-child) relationship within families.

Fourth, our study sample may have been too small to perform a multigroup comparison. Kashy and Kenny (1990) suggested that as few as 50 families are adequate for SRM analysis. However, by subdividing our total sample size into two smaller groups, depending on the residential status of the emerging adult, one of our groups comprised less than 50 families. The use of such small samples may have implications for the robustness of the estimated parameter solution. Future research, including larger groups, should indicate whether there are indeed no differences in the family dynamics that contribute to separation anxiety in families where emerging adults live with their parents in comparison to families where emerging adults live away.

Finally, studies in other countries than Belgium are warranted to further investigate the role of physical separation from the parents, as manifested by moving out of the parental home, in psychological separation anxiety. Because Belgium is a small country, everyone lives within relatively close distance from each other. As such, living away from the parents might still be associated with high levels of physical contact with the parents. Studies in larger countries, like

the U.S. and Canada, where moving out of the parental home implies a more substantial physical rupture from the parents, are needed before we can conclude that living away from the parental home does not alter the level of psychological separation anxiety and the variance-components of separation anxiety in the family relationships.

Conclusion

To the best of our knowledge, the present study was the first to examine the concept of separation anxiety from a family dynamics perspective using an SRM approach. Although separation anxiety has been mainly investigated in infancy and within the mother-child dyad, analysis at the family level in families with emerging adults revealed that separation anxiety reflects a personality attribute of all family members as well as a characteristic of specific family relationships and the family as a whole. The notion that separation anxiety would be particularly salient within the mother-child dyad did receive some support. Interestingly, separation anxiety was also a unique component within marital relationships, particularly for fathers. As a result, clinical interventions in families with high levels of separation anxiety may want to focus on the individual, relationship, and family level.

Chapter 7

When the separation-individuation process goes awry: Distinguishing between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence[1]

Problematic separation-individuation has been conceptualized almost unilaterally as separation anxiety or as intolerance for being alone (i.e., dysfunctional dependence). However, as separation-individuation involves a dynamic interaction between independence and relatedness, it was argued in this study that disturbances in the separation-individuation process could manifest in at least two ways, that is, as dysfunctional dependence and as dysfunctional independence. In a sample of 232 emerging adults, we examined correlates and outcomes of the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. We found that both types were related in similar ways to depressive symptoms and a general measure of pathological separation-individuation. Yet, they were associated differentially and in theoretically expected ways with (a) dimensions of attachment (i.e., anxiety and avoidance), and (b) dimensions of personality that confer vulnerability to depression (i.e., dependency and self-criticism). In addition, person-centered results showed evidence for four groups of individuals with distinct profiles of separation-individuation (i.e., healthy, dysfunctional dependent, dysfunctional independent, and combined). Implications for clinical practice and future research are discussed.

[1]Kins, E., Beyers, W., & Soenens, B. (in press). When the separation-individuation process goes awry: Distinguishing between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence. *International Journal of Behavioral Development.*

The process of separation-individuation is an intrapsychic process that reverberates throughout the life cycle. It refers to the establishment of a sense of self, separate from other primary love objects (i.e., separation) and the acquisition of one's own individual characteristics or unique individuality (i.e., individuation) (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). Although this process is never finished, its principal developmental challenges are situated in early childhood and adolescence/emerging adulthood. These two life periods are defined as the first (Mahler, 1963) and second phase of separation-individuation, respectively (Blos, 1962, 1967). Throughout both phases, the child gradually reduces psychological dependence from significant others, especially parents, while trying to maintain a sense of connectedness with them. Hence, the separation-individuation process is about the resolution of a complex dialectical interaction between independence and relatedness (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986).

From this notion of an interaction between independence and relatedness, it follows that disturbances in the separation-individuation process may manifest in at least two different ways. Specifically, dysfunctional separation-individuation may manifest as inadequate coping with the issue of independence or as inadequate coping with the issue of relatedness. In this regard, we argue that research on separation-individuation can be informed by attachment theory based research and research on personality vulnerability. In both literatures, a distinction has been made between an orientation primarily involving concerns with relatedness (i.e., attachment anxiety and dependency) and an orientation involving concerns with individuality (i.e., attachment avoidance and self-criticism) (Blatt & Maroudas, 1992). Yet, current diagnostic models and empirical frameworks have tended to emphasize dysfunctional dependence as the main manifestation of problematic separation-individuation. To redress this imbalance, the overarching goal of this study was to examine commonalities and differences between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence. Specifically, this goal is pursued by examining associations of the two manifestations of unsuccessful separation-individuation (a) with commonly used

measures of pathological separation-individuation, and (b) with measures of dimensions of attachment and personality vulnerability to depression. These research questions were examined in a sample of emerging adults because the process of separation-individuation forms a critical turning point in the movement towards more independent functioning in their transition to adult life (Tanner, 2006).

The First and Second Process of Separation-Individuation

During the first separation-individuation process, the child emerges from the symbiotic relation with the caregiver to become an individuated toddler, experiencing a "sense of identity" for the first time. The onset of this phase is situated at about four to five months of age and is terminated by the time the child turns three years old (Mahler, 1963). This first process of separation-individuation is further subdivided into four subphases. These phases reflect the child's oscillation between a need to defend its recently achieved independence on the one hand and a wish for reunion with the caregiver on the other hand. That is, during the *differentiation* and *practicing period*, the young child becomes aware of its bodily separation from the caregiver and lives out this separation through its increasing abilities for independent locomotor functioning. Subsequently, in the *rapprochement* subphase, the child actively seeks for proximity of the caregiver again. It is not until the final stage (i.e., *consolidation of individuality and the beginnings of emotional object constancy*) that the child is able to find an optimal balance between distance and closeness to the caregiver. This balance is achieved through identification with the caregiver and through internalization of rules and demands (Mahler et al., 1975).

Puberty marks the onset of the second process of separation-individuation (Blos, 1967, 1979). The adolescent relinquishes him/herself from childlike family dependencies and from earlier representations of the self and others (Blos, 1967). Due to both physical and cognitive development, adolescents no longer see themselves as children and caregivers too are no longer perceived as the almighty figures they once were during childhood. This process of

deidealization gives adolescents the opportunity to actively search for who they are, outside the family of origin. However, similar to the first separation-individuation process of early childhood, adolescents are likely to experience feelings of ambivalence over their newly gained independence as they wish to remain connected to the parents (Allen et al., 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Josselson, 1980). During this phase, the ambivalence can be overcome by gradually transforming the hierarchical parent-child relationship of childhood into a mutual relationship between two equal adults (Aquilino, 1997). Clearly then, healthy separation-individuation is a matter of balancing strivings for separation/independence and strivings for closeness and connectedness (Allen et al., 1994).

Because the transition to adulthood is prolonged in Western postindustrial societies (Arnett, 2000), the redefinition of the relation between the individual and his/her parents typically continues beyond adolescence. Extant research has provided evidence for this idea, with separation-individuation processes in late adolescence and emerging adulthood being associated with psychological adjustment (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999; Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993) and adjustment to college (Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Mattanah, Brand, & Hancock, 2004; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990). These findings suggest that the transformation of the parent-child relationship, entailing a shift from parent-regulation to self-regulation, is active and highly salient during emerging adulthood (Tanner, 2006). Therefore, it was decided to focus on emerging adults in the present study.

Unsuccessful Resolution of the Separation-Individuation Process

Individuals' success in progressing through the separation-individuation process is thought to have implications for personal adjustment and later psychosocial functioning. Conversely, when people fail to deal adequately with the developmental tasks of the separation-individuation process, they are thought to become vulnerable to psychopathology (Blos, 1979; Mahler et al., 1975; Pine, 1979). Given that a healthy resolution of the separation-individuation process

entails obtaining an optimal balance between closeness and distance in close relationships (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989), it logically follows that disturbances of the separation-individuation process may manifest either as problems of coping with the developmental task of achieving independence or as problems of coping with the task of staying connected to other people. When people fail to obtain a healthy degree of separation/independence from others, they may develop a dysfunctional dependent orientation, where they need constant physical and emotional proximity of others to maintain their well-being. In contrast, when people fail to remain connected to other people, they may develop a dysfunctional independent orientation, where they constantly strive for self-reliance and consider any type of intervention by others as an intrusion.

Although it seems plausible to define at least two broad categories of separation-individuation disturbances, diagnostic models and empirical research have tended either to focus exclusively on dysfunctional dependence or to rely on global and undifferentiated measures of pathological separation-individuation. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000), for instance, includes the separation anxiety disorder as a mental disorder that is usually first diagnosed in infancy, early childhood, or adolescence. Symptoms of this disorder involve distress when separated from attachment figures, persistent worrying about loss, and extreme fear of being alone. Similarly, research has typically focused on the dependent type of separation-individuation pathology. Wood (2006), for instance, found that children's separation anxiety was predicted by parental intrusiveness. Other studies have used a general and undifferentiated measure, not allowing to distinguish between possible subtypes of problematic separation-individuation. One often used general measure of pathological separation-individuation is the PATHSEP measure developed by Christenson and Wilson (1985). Although this scale was developed to capture a variety of disturbances in the separation-individuation process, studies have shown that all items of this measure coalesce

around a single factor (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2011; Lapsley, Aalsma, & Varshney, 2001).

The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA; Levine, Green, & Million, 1986) seems to be the most differentiated measure of healthy and unhealthy separation-individuation currently available. It has been used to examine associations between unhealthy separation-individuation and diverse developmental outcomes (e.g., anxiety) (e.g., McClanahan & Holmbeck 1992; Holmbeck & Leake, 1999; Rice et al., 1990). Some of the SITA scales seem to tap rather specifically into dysfunctional dependence. The *Nurturance-Symbiosis* subscale, for instance describes individuals who have enmeshed interpersonal relationships in which they wish for a state of oneness with the other. Similarly, the *Separation Anxiety* scale is an assessment of strong fears of losing emotional and physical contact with the other following the realization of one's increasing separateness from others. In contrast, other scales from the SITA seem to tap into dysfunctional independence. The *Engulfment Anxiety* scale, for instance, taps into fear of close interpersonal relationships and a view of closeness as a threat to one's independence. Similarly, the *Need Denial or Dependency Denial* subscale describes individuals who deny or avoid their need for connectedness as a defensive way of dealing with increasing demands for separation.

For the purpose of this study, we selected two of the SITA scales that, in our view, represent the most direct and valid indicators of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, that is, Separation Anxiety and Dependency Denial, respectively. First, inspection of the SITA items showed that, in terms of face validity, the items of the Separation Anxiety scale and the Dependency Denial scale best represent the concepts of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, respectively. Second, previous research using the SITA (McClanahan & Holmbeck, 1992) demonstrated that of the scales most closely linked to the concept of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, Separation Anxiety and Dependency Denial, demonstrated the highest predictive validity, with both scales showing the

strongest and most robust associations with measures of ill-being (e.g., depression, anxiety, and loneliness).

Nomological Network of Associations with Relevant Constructs

A first aim of this study was to substantiate the distinction between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence by developing a nomological network of associations with relevant constructs. To do so, we examined how both expressions of problematic separation-individuation relate to undifferentiated and one-sided measures of pathological separation-individuation and to a measure of depression. We also considered associations with relevant constructs from attachment theory and from Blatt's theory on personality vulnerability to depression.

Other measures of dysfunctional separation-individuation and depression. Because both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence represent disturbances in the process of separation-individuation, it was expected that both would relate positively to a general and undifferentiated measure of separation-individuation pathology (i.e., PATHSEP). Further, if our claim that problematic separation-individuation, as defined by the DSM-IV, is characterized by a one-sided focus on fears of being alone (i.e., dysfunctional dependence) is true, a measure of the DSM-based diagnostic criteria of the separation anxiety disorder should be mainly or even uniquely related to our measure of dysfunctional dependence (i.e., Separation Anxiety) and to a lesser extent or not to our measure of dysfunctional independence (i.e., Dependency Denial). Finally, given that problematic separation-individuation is considered to be a risk factor for maladjustment and psychopathology (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Dolan, Evans, & Norton, 1992; Lapsley et al., 2001; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002), it was examined whether the two manifestations of dysfunctional separation-individuation would relate independently to emerging adults' ill-being and to depressive symptoms in particular.

Attachment theory. During the processes of separation and individuation the child/adolescent needs to achieve a sense of intrapsychic

separateness in order to become an individuated person. This newly gained independence might at least temporarily be experienced as a threat to the relationship with the attachment figure and may as such elicit feelings of loss (Blos, 1979; Mahler, 1963; Mahler et al., 1975; Levy-Warren, 1999). In attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), it is argued that the way people react to such a loss or threat of loss of close relationships depends on the representational models of attachment figures and the self that were developed early in life. Those with a secure internal working model or mental representation of attachment relationships are likely to respond adequately to events of separation. In contrast, insecurely attached individuals may feel more strongly threatened by the developmental demands of the separation-individuation process and may therefore develop derivative ways of coping with this process. Interestingly, in attachment theory a distinction is made between two instantiations of insecure attachment, each of which may relate differentially to the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). That is, individuals high on attachment *anxiety* are insecure about availability of attachment figures. They are preoccupied with social support and highly vigilant about abandonment and rejection. These individuals are particularly likely to experience the separation-individuation process as a threat to closeness in their relationships and may as such fail to achieve a healthy degree of separation. In contrast, individuals high on *avoidance* have a strong preference for emotional distance and feel uncomfortable with closeness or dependence on others. These individuals are likely to have difficulties balancing their strong urge for independence with the establishment of close relationships. Instead, they may display excessive strivings for self-reliance and independence, as expressed for instance in denial of dependence.

Testifying to the validity of the distinction between attachment anxiety and avoidance, research has shown convincingly that, whereas both attachment orientations relate independently to ill-being (e.g., depressive symptoms), they relate differentially to features of personality, interpersonal functioning, and emotion-regulation (for an overview, see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2002). It has

been shown, for instance, that attachment anxiety is primarily related to hyperactivation of negative emotions and that attachment avoidance is primarily related to deactivation or suppression of negative emotions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2002). In the present study it was expected that dysfunctional dependence would be most strongly associated with attachment-related anxiety, whereas dysfunctional independence would be most strongly associated with attachment-related avoidance.

Blatt's theory of depressive personality. Similar to models of separation-individuation, Blatt's (1974, 2004) theory on personality development and vulnerability to depression views personality development as an ongoing dialectical interaction between two developmental lines, that is, interpersonal relatedness and self-definition (Blatt, 2004; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994). Ideally, relatedness and individuality develop throughout the life cycle in an interrelated manner, with achievements in one line contributing to and being contingent upon achievements in the other line (Blatt & Shichman, 1983). Vulnerability to psychopathology and to depression in particular would ensue when people develop an excessive focus on one of these two developmental lines, at the expense of the other developmental line. Thus, Blatt (1974, 2004) distinguishes between two major personality vulnerabilities, that is, dependency and self-criticism. A dependent personality orientation is characterized by excessive attempts to establish and maintain satisfying interpersonal relationships, resulting in a neglect of the development of identity or a sense of self. Dependency would create a vulnerability to a type of depression characterized by feelings of loss, abandonment, and loneliness. Given their problems of coping with increasing demands for separation and independence, dependent individuals are likely to display dysfunctional dependence. Self-critical individuals, in contrast, are highly preoccupied with self-definition and personal achievement, at the expense of close relationships (Blatt & Maroudas, 1992). Self-criticism would render individuals vulnerable to a type of depression characterized by feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, and guilt (Blatt, 1974). Given their preoccupation with

personal achievement at the expense of relatedness, self-critical individuals are likely to display dysfunctional independence.

Research already addressed associations between Blatt's configurations of psychopathology and the dimensions of insecure attachment style (e.g., Zuroff & Fitzpatrick, 1995). Findings suggest that, whereas dependency is primarily related to attachment anxiety, self-criticism is primarily related to attachment avoidance. It remains to be examined, however, whether Blatt's personality dimensions relate differentially to the two types of problematic separation-individuation. We expected that a dependent personality orientation would be predominantly related to problematic separation-individuation of the dependent type and that a self-critical personality orientation would be predominantly related to dysfunctional independence.

A Person Centered-Approach to Derive Profiles of Problematic Separation-Individuation

A second aim of this study was to ascertain how many separation-individuation profiles could be distinguished based on individuals' scores on dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence. These profiles were then further examined by relating them to the same nomological network of variables discussed in the preceding section. Such a person-centered approach was deemed important for at least two reasons. First, the identification of separation-individuation profiles could provide further evidence for the notion that disturbances in the separation-individuation process might be expressed in two possible ways. Second, gaining insight in the specific characteristics of each of these subgroups and how they relate to other relevant measures of psychosocial functioning would be instructive for diagnostic purposes and therapeutic interventions.

To date, only a few studies have used a person-centered approach (i.e., cluster analysis) to classify individuals into different groups on the basis of separation-individuation measures (McClanahan & Holmbeck, 1992; Kruse & Walper, 2008). Using cluster analysis, we aimed to identify different subtypes of

problematic separation-individuation. Given that dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were expected to represent two qualitatively different ways in which individuals can express disturbances in the process of separation-individuation, we hypothesized that at least three different separation-individuation profiles could be identified: (1) a group that has resolved the separation-individuation process in a healthy manner and thus shows neither signs of dysfunctional dependence nor signs of dysfunctional independence, (2) a subgroup that predominantly demonstrates separation-individuation problems of the dependent type, and (3), a group presenting exclusively disturbances of the independent type. In addition, we also explored the possibility that some individuals might display the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation simultaneously (i.e., high on both dimensions). Extant person-centered research on separation-individuation has yielded rather mixed evidence for this idea. That is, even though some evidence was obtained for a group that successfully resolved the separation-individuation process and a group showing symptoms of both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, McClanahan and Holmbeck (1992) could not distinguish a group that demonstrates a pure dysfunctional independent type of separation-individuation pathology, whereas Kruse and Walper (2008) could not find evidence for a pure dysfunctional dependent type of problematic separation-individuation. Thus, additional person-centered research on separation-individuation that adds to these inconsistent results is warranted. To obtain a purer cluster solution, the current study only included the two SITA scales that are considered the most valid indicators of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence.

Furthermore, we also aimed to examine associations between the clusters and the nomological network of variables used to differentiate between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence: that is, general separation-individuation pathology, DSM separation anxiety disorder, depressive symptoms, attachment and personality orientation. We anticipated that individuals in both the cluster high on dysfunctional dependence and the cluster high on dysfunctional independence would display more maladjustment (i.e.,

elevated scores on depressive symptoms and on an undifferentiated measure of pathological separation-individuation) compared to individuals in the healthy separation-individuation cluster. Individuals in the cluster high on dysfunctional dependence were expected to display particularly elevated scores on a DSM-based measure of separation anxiety, attachment anxiety, and dependency. Individuals in the cluster high on dysfunctional independence were expected to display particularly elevated scores on attachment avoidance and self-criticism. Conversely, subjects in the healthy separation-individuation cluster were expected to display a secure attachment profile (i.e., low anxiety and avoidance) as well as low scores on Blatt's personality dimensions.

The Present Study

The overarching aim of this study was to examine whether dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence could be distinguished as two qualitatively different forms of disturbed separation-individuation in a sample of emerging adults. We had two specific research aims. First, we aimed to relate both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation to a nomological network of variables, including extant measures of separation-individuation pathology, a measure of depressive symptoms, and measures of attachment and Blatt's personality orientations. Second, we aimed to identify different separation-individuation profiles by means of a person-centered approach. In examining the two specific research aims of this study, we additionally explored associations between some relevant background variables and the study variables: that is, age, gender, family structure (i.e., intact vs. nonintact), relationship status (i.e., having a partner or not), and residential status (i.e., with parents, semi-independent, independent).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study was conducted in Belgium, with most participants being recruited within the area of a midsized city. Participants were 232

emerging adults aged between 21 and 26 years. Subjects were recruited through undergraduate psychology students as part of a course on developmental psychology. Each student was asked to contact two emerging adults who had to meet certain criteria with respect to age and gender. That is, the first emerging adult had to be between 21 and 23 years old and the second emerging adult had to be between 24 and 26 years old. Moreover, one emerging adult needed to be female, the other male. As a result, we obtained a sample with an equal number of men and women and covering a broad age segment of the emerging adult period. The mean age of the total sample of emerging adults was 23 years and 7 months (*SD* = 1 year, 9 months). Most of them were highly educated (i.e., 75% followed post-secondary education), and came from intact families (i.e., 79%). At the time of data gathering, 43% of the participants lived permanently in the parental household, whereas 31% lived fully independent. The other 26% lived in a semi-independent living situation, which means that they lived away from the parents but returned to the parental home on a regular basis (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1986; Kins, Beyers, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2009). More than half of the emerging adults (i.e., 62%) reported to be involved in a romantic relationship.

Emerging adults who agreed to take part in this study received questionnaires that were completed during a home visit. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed. The number of missing values in this data set was small (i.e., 2%) and according to Little's test these data were missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(217, N = 232) = 183.60$, *ns*. Therefore, the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm was used to obtain maximum likelihood estimates for the missing values (Schafer, 1997). Hence, all further analyses relied on a sample of 232 people.

Measures

Two types of disturbed separation-individuation. To measure dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, we used the Separation Anxiety scale and the Dependency Denial scale from the Separation-

Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA; Levine et al., 1986). Items are scored on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all)* to 5 (*totally applies)*. The Separation Anxiety subscale comprises 8 items referring to a strong fear of abandonment and loss of important others. A sample item reads: "I worry about being disapproved of by others". This subscale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .78). The 13 items of the Dependency Denial subscale reflect dysfunctional strivings for independence as a kind of defensive style against feelings of anxiety associated with separation (e.g., "I don't really need anyone"). Cronbach's alpha was .78 in the present study.

To examine whether dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence represent two different expressions of problematic separation-individuation, we tested the factor structure of the items of the Separation Anxiety and Dependency Denial subscales of the SITA with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Lisrel 8.71 with Maximum Likelihood Estimation (Jöreskög & Sörbom, 1996). Chi-square difference testing revealed that a two-factor model represented the SITA items clearly better ($\chi^2(188) = 413.99$; RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .09; CFI = .88) than a single-factor model ($\chi^2(189) = 994.02$; RMSEA = .14; SRMR = .13; CFI = .58): $\Delta\chi^2 = 230.11$; $df = 1$; $p < .001$. The fit of the two-factor solution was less than optimal in terms of CFI, but improved significantly when allowing an error correlation between two items of the separation anxiety subscale both referring to "death" ($\Delta\chi^2 = 25.28$; $df = 1$; $p < .001$). Further, because one of the items of the Dependency Denial subscale had a substantial cross-loading on the dysfunctional dependence factor, we decided to remove this item ("Often I don't understand what people want out of a close relationship with me") in all further analyses. In line with the criteria for model evaluation (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1990), this final two-factor model—with 8 items representing dysfunctional dependence and with 12 items representing dysfunctional independence—revealed good fit: $\chi^2(168) = 288.78$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .08; CFI = .93.

Alternative measures of separation-individuation. Participants were administered two well-validated and frequently used measures of disturbances in

the process of separation-individuation. First, emerging adults completed a general measure of pathology of separation-individuation (PATHSEP; Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Lapsley et al., 2001). Scale construction of the PATHSEP was based on Pine's (1979) clinical observations of disturbances in the separation-individuation process. Although the 39 items of this questionnaire refer to various expressions of pathological separation-individuation (e.g., difficulty in differentiating from others, splitting, relationship disturbances), factor analytical examination has repeatedly shown that the common variance of the items is represented by a single factor (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Kins, et al., 2011; Lapsley et al., 2001). As such, an overall scale score is computed, with higher scores being indicative of greater separation-individuation pathology. Reliability and validity of this scale were demonstrated in previous studies (Christenson & Wilson, 1985; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Cronbach's alpha was .89 in the current sample.

Second, participants filled out the Separation Anxiety Disorder subscale of the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS; Chorpita, Yim, Moffitt, Umemoto, & Francis, 2000). The seven items of this scale measure separation-individuation disturbances in terms of the DSM diagnostic criteria for separation anxiety disorder (DSM-IV-R; APA, 2000). Respondents are asked to rate how often each of the items (e.g., "Fear of being alone at home") applies to them on a scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*always*). Support for reliability and validity of the full RCADS has been provided in previous studies (Chorpita et al., 2000; Chorpita, Moffitt, & Gray, 2005). In our sample Cronbach's alpha was .67.

Depressive symptoms. Emerging adults were administered the 12-item version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). This scale assesses the respondent's level of distress and depressive symptoms experienced during the past week. Items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never or seldom*) to 3 (*mostly or always*) and cover somatic, as well as emotional, and cognitive symptoms of depression. Previous studies showed adequate reliability and validity of this version of the CES-D (Roberts & Sobhan, 1992). Cronbach's alpha in this study was .82.

Attachment and personality. First, the Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) was administered to capture attachment anxiety and avoidance in the relationship with a romantic partner, or—for those who did not have partner—in the relationship with a close friend (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The ECR-R is a 36-item self-report measure with half of the items referring to anxiety or fear of rejection and abandonment (e.g., "I often worry that *the other* won't care about me as much as I care about him/her"), and the other half reflecting discomfort with closeness (e.g., "I tell *the other* just about everything"; reverse coded). Items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .91 for the anxiety scale and .92 for the avoidance scale.

Second, Blatt's personality dimensions were measured with the 19-item version (Bagby, Parker, Joffe, & Buis, 1994) of the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ; Blatt, D'Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1976). The dependent personality orientation was measured with 10 items (e.g., "After an argument, I feel very lonely"); the self-critical orientation with 9 items (e.g., "There is a considerable difference between how I am now and how I would like to be"). All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all)* to 5 *(totally applies)*. This version of the DEQ has shown good reliability and validity (Bagby et al., 1994). In our sample, Cronbach's alpha was .70 for the Dependency scale and .85 for the Self-Criticism scale.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Before examining the two main research aims of this study, we conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) to explore associations between the background variables and the study variables. For the purpose of this analysis, all study variables were entered as dependent variables. Independent variables were gender, family structure (i.e., intact vs. nonintact), relationship status (i.e., having a partner or not), and residential status (i.e., with

parents, semi-independent, independent). Age was entered as a covariate. Significant multivariate main effects emerged for gender, $F(9, 217) = 3.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$, and relationship status, $F(9, 217) = 9.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .28$. Follow-up univariate analyses of these significant background variables are displayed in Table 1. First, gender differences were found for the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. That is, whereas emerging adult women had significantly higher scores on dysfunctional dependence, emerging adult men scored significantly higher on dysfunctional independence. Further, women also scored higher on the symptom-specific measure of the DSM separation anxiety disorder in comparison with men. Second, emerging adults involved in a partner relationship reported significantly lower scores on a number of study variables than their single peers. Specifically, they scored lower with respect to dysfunctional independence and on a general measure of separation-individuation pathology. Emerging adults with a partner also reported less depressive symptoms and both lower attachment-related anxiety and avoidance than those who were not involved in a romantic relationship. Finally, emerging adults with a partner scored significantly lower on Blatt's self-critical personality orientation as well. In conclusion, because both gender and relationship status appeared to be significantly related to some of the study variables, we decided to control for these background variables in all subsequent analyses.

The Nomological Network of the Types of Separation-Individuation Disturbances

The first aim of this study was to examine how both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation would relate to a nomological network of relevant variables. First, we examined how dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were associated with a general measure of pathological separation (i.e., PATHSEP), with a DSM-based measure of separation anxiety disorder, and with a measure of depressive symptoms. Second, we examined correlations between measures of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence and measures of attachment (i.e., anxiety and

Table 1

Univariate Follow-up Analyses of Background Variables with a Significant Multivariate Effect on the Study Variables

	Gender						Relationship Status					
	Male		Female				No Partner		Partner			
Variables	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(1, 225)	η^2	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F* (1, 225)	η^2
Dysfunctional dependence	2.65	.66	2.85	.66	4.73*	.02	2.82	.64	2.71	.68	1.08	.01
Dysfunctional independence	1.84	.45	1.64	.41	14.42***	.06	1.87	.45	1.66	.41	17.13***	.07
PATHSEP	2.23	.42	2.18	.42	.81	.00	2.28	.42	2.16	.41	4.29*	.02
DSM-SAD	.29	.27	.43	.38	9.47**	.04	.37	.31	.36	.35	.27	.00
CES-D	.62	.44	.64	.39	.12	.00	.74	.48	.56	.36	11.64**	.05
ECR-R – Anxiety	2.97	.97	2.85	.89	.28	.00	3.37	.91	2.63	.83	30.39***	.12
ECR-R – Avoidance	2.75	.87	2.59	.82	1.56	.01	3.19	.75	2.35	.74	64.03***	.22
DEQ – Dependency	2.96	.54	3.03	.53	1.40	.01	3.02	.55	2.98	.53	.02	.00
DEQ – Self-Criticism	2.32	.64	2.30	.61	.21	.00	2.52	.66	2.18	.57	11.07**	.05

Notes: PATHSEP = Pathological Separation, DSM-SAD = DSM Separation Anxiety Disorder, CES-D = Centre for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression scale, ECR-R = Experiences in Close Relationships Revised, DEQ = Depressive Experiences Questionnaire. All variables were scored on 5-point Likert scales, except for DSM-SAD and CES-D, which were scored on 4-point Likert scales ranging from 0 (*never or seldom*) to 3 (*mostly or always*), and ECR-R, which was scored on a 7-point Likert scale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

avoidance) and personality vulnerability (i.e., dependency and self-criticism). Correlations with all these measures are displayed in Table 2.

Associations with other measures of disturbed separation-individuation and with depressive symptoms. Both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were strongly related to PATHSEP, that is, the general and undifferentiated measure of separation-individuation pathology. Direct comparison of the size of both correlations (see the right column in Table 2) showed that both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation were equally strongly related to PATHSEP. Similarly, both types of problematic separation-individuation were equally strongly and positively related to depressive symptoms. In contrast and in line with our expectations, only dysfunctional dependence showed a strong association with a DSM-based measure of separation anxiety disorder. Although dysfunctional independence also showed a positive and significant association with the latter measure, the size of this association was significantly smaller and was reduced to nonsignificance when controlling for the small amount of variance shared between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence (partial $r = .10$, *ns*).

Associations with measures of attachment and personality orientation. Because we found substantial correlations among the two attachment dimensions as measured with the ECR-R ($r = .48$, $p < .001$) and among the two dimensions of depressive personality as measured with the DEQ ($r = .58$, $p < .001$) we calculated residual scores for each of these subscales thereby controlling for the variance they share with their counterpart subscale from the same measure. For instance, a residual score for attachment anxiety was computed by regressing attachment anxiety on attachment avoidance and by saving the unstandardized residual score obtained in this regression analysis. This residual score reflects participants' attachment anxiety net of attachment avoidance. Table 2 shows correlations with both the original scale scores and these residual scores.

Table 2

Nomological Network of Two Types of Dysfunctional Separation-Individuation (N = 232)

	Dysf. Dependence	Dysf. Independence	Comparing correlations
	r	*r*	*Z*
PATHSEP	.54***	.41***	1.79
DSM-SAD	.47***	.19**	3.48***
CES-D	.38***	.27***	1.34
Raw Scores			
ECR-R			
Anxiety	.56***	.30***	3.47***
Avoidance	.18**	.45***	–3.32***
DEQ			
Dependency	.65***	.08	7.69***
Self-Criticism	.60***	.40***	2.84**
Residual Scores			
ECR-R			
Anxiety	.52***	.10	
Avoidance	–.12	.32***	
DEQ			
Dependency	.38***	–.18**	
Self-Criticism	.26***	.44***	

Note: PATHSEP = Pathological Separation, DSM-SAD = DSM Separation Anxiety Disorder, CES-D = Centre for Epidemiologic Studies – Depression scale, ECR-R = Experiences in Close Relationships Revised, DEQ = Depressive Experiences Questionnaire.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Although dysfunctional dependence was related positively to both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, the strongest correlation was with attachment anxiety. This difference in the size of association with anxiety and avoidance became even more pronounced after controlling for the variance shared between both attachment dimensions. Conversely, dysfunctional independence was related to both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, yet showed its strongest correlation with avoidance. After the variance shared

between both attachment dimensions was controlled for, dysfunctional independence was even uniquely related to attachment avoidance.

Further, dysfunctional dependence was related to both dependency and self-criticism. Although, after controlling for the variance between both dimensions of personality vulnerability, the strongest association was with dependency, dysfunctional dependence was still substantially related to self-criticism as well. Dysfunctional independence was only related to self-criticism. After controlling for the variance between the two dimensions of personality vulnerability, dysfunctional independence was even related negatively to dependency.

Profiles of Problematic Separation-Individuation: A Person-Centered Approach

To identify profiles of dysfunctional separation-individuation, we performed a cluster analysis with dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence as clustering variables. We followed a two-step procedure (Gore, 2000) including a hierarchical clustering using Ward's method followed by a *k*-means cluster analysis. Initial cluster centers, derived from the hierarchical cluster solution in the first step, were used as nonrandom starting points in a subsequent *k*-means clustering procedure (Gore, 2000).

Prior to the cluster analysis, scores for dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were standardized and the data were inspected for outliers. Univariate outliers were identified as subjects scoring higher than three standard deviations above or below the mean (i.e., absolute *z*-score > 3). Multivariate outliers were identified using Mahalanobis distance measure. Only one univariate outlier was removed, resulting in a sample of 231 participants. In the first step of the clustering procedure, hierarchical clustering (Ward's method) was used to determine the number of clusters. On the basis of the scree plot of the combined cluster distances and taking into account the stepsize criterion (Milligan & Cooper, 1985), we decided to consider three- to five-cluster solutions. In a second step, cluster centers derived from Ward's method were

used as nonrandom starting points in an iterative *k*-means cluster analysis. This step was applied to the three-, four-, and five-cluster solution. In the end, the four-cluster solution was retained based on parsimony, theoretical interpretability, and explanatory power. The final four-cluster solution, explaining 64% and 73% of the variance in dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence respectively, is depicted in Figure 1. To interpret the distinguished clusters, *z*-scores on both expressions of problematic separation-individuation (presented on the *y*-axis) were inspected within each of the clusters. These *z*-scores, which indicate the distances between the cluster means and the total sample standardized mean in terms of standard deviation units, can be interpreted as effect sizes (Scholte, van Lieshout, de Wit & van Aken, 2005). Analogous to Cohen's (1988) *d*, 0.2 *SD* is a small effect, 0.5 *SD* is a medium or moderate effect, and 0.8 *SD* is a large effect.

Cluster 1 (n = 85, 37%) included participants who scored low on both dysfunctional dependence (z = –.90) and dysfunctional independence (z = –.55). Participants in this cluster will be denoted as *healthy*, because these participants seem to show no signs of either type of separation-individuation disturbances. Cluster 2 (n = 58, 25%) comprised participants who scored high on dysfunctional dependence (z = .72) but low on dysfunctional independence (z = –.73). Therefore, participants in this cluster will be referred to as *dysfunctional dependent*. Cluster 3 (n = 41, 18%) consisted of participants scoring relatively low on dysfunctional dependence (z = –.27), but very high on dysfunctional independence (z = 1.55). As a result, participants in this cluster will be referred to as *dysfunctional independent*. Finally, Cluster 4 (n = 47, 20%) comprised participants with elevated scores on both dysfunctional dependence (z = .91) and dysfunctional independence (z = .54). Because these participants are anxious about being alone but avoid at the same intimacy and close relationships, they will be referred to as *combined dysfunctional dependent and dysfunctional independent* or simply *combined*.

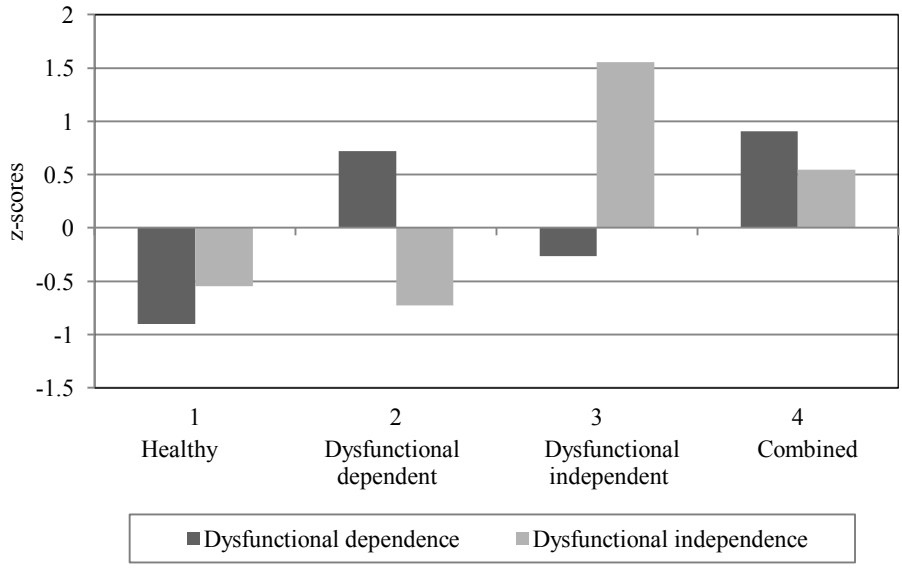

Figure 1. *Z*-scores for the dependent and independent type of dysfunctional separation-individuation in the four-cluster solution.

The stability of this four-cluster solution was examined with a double-split cross-validation procedure (Breckenridge, 2000). For this purpose, we divided our sample randomly in two halves (subsample A and B). The two-step clustering procedure (i.e., Ward, followed by *k*-means) was applied within each of the subsamples. Next, participants of each subsample were assigned to new clusters on the basis of their Euclidean distance to the final cluster centers of the other subsample. These new clusters were compared with the original cluster-solution by means of Cohen's kappa (κ). The two resulting kappa's, one from each of the subsamples, were then averaged. An average kappa value of .60 is considered acceptable (Breckenridge, 2000). For the present study the average kappa across subsamples was .82, suggesting that the four-cluster solution is highly stable.

Next, to examine how the four distinguished separation-individuation profiles differ with respect to the nomological network of variables discussed in the first research aim, we conducted a MANCOVA with cluster membership as the independent variable and emerging adults' scores on the alternative measures

of problematic separation-individuation (i.e., PATHSEP and RCADS-SAD), depressive symptoms (i.e., CES-D), attachment (i.e., ECR-R), and personality vulnerability (i.e., DEQ) as dependent variables. For attachment and personality vulnerability, we used the residual scores discussed earlier. We controlled for the effects of gender and relationship status by entering them as covariates. Results revealed a significant multivariate effect of cluster membership, $F(21, 629) = 8.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$. The F values and effect sizes of the follow-up univariate analyses, along with the means and standard deviations of the nomological network of variables across each of the clusters, are displayed in Table 3. Each of the univariate ANOVAs was statistically significant and effect sizes ranged from .10 to .29. Post hoc Tukey comparisons indicated that the dysfunctional dependent, dysfunctional independent, and combined cluster did not differ in terms of overall separation-individuation pathology (i.e., PATHSEP), DSM Separation Anxiety Disorder, and depressive symptomatology. In line with expectations, individuals in the healthy cluster scored significantly lower on all these variables. Moreover, the healthy subgroup also showed the lowest scores for attachment anxiety and low scores for attachment avoidance and Blatt's personality orientations. In line with expectations, participants in the dysfunctional dependent cluster demonstrated elevated scores on attachment anxiety and dependency, whereas the dysfunctional independent cluster showed high scores on attachment avoidance and self-criticism. Although the overall mean score for attachment anxiety was low in the dysfunctional independent cluster, it was still significantly higher in comparison to the healthy cluster. Finally, participants in the combined cluster showed the highest scores for attachment anxiety along with high scores on both dependency and self-criticism. Contrary to expectations, the overall mean score for attachment avoidance was low in the combined cluster.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of the Nomological Network of Variables by Cluster

Variables	Cluster 1: Healthy		Cluster 2: Dysfunctional Dependent		Cluster 3: Dysfunctional Independent		Cluster 4: Combined			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	$F(3, 225)$	η^2
PATHSEP	1.91_{b}	.31	2.27_{a}	.36	2.43_{a}	.36	2.43_{a}	.39	30.67***	.29
DSM-SAD	$.20_{b}$	.23	$.47_{a}$	.34	$.37_{a}$	.30	$.49_{a}$	.38	13.31***	.15
CES-D	$.42_{b}$	.31	$.68_{a}$	.35	$.75_{a}$	.47	$.84_{a}$	.45	12.99***	.15
ECR-R										
- Anxiety	$-.47_{c}$	.61	$.28_{ab}$	.68	$.01_{b}$	.86	$.46_{a}$	.79	20.53***	.22
- Avoidance	$-.07_{b}$	.59	$-.27_{b}$	.67	$.52_{a}$	.78	$.04_{b}$	.80	8.55***	.10
DEQ										
- Dependency	$-.11_{b}$	.40	$.23_{a}$	.46	$-.23_{b}$	.34	$.09_{a}$	.39	12.81***	.17
- Self-Criticism	$-.23_{b}$	.46	$-.10_{b}$	.47	$.33_{a}$	.38	$.24_{a}$	.50	15.21***	.17

Notes. Means that do not share subscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$; Tukey contrasts). Items of PATHSEP were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, whereas those of CES-D and DSM-SAD on 4-point Likert-scales ranging from 0 (*never or seldom*) to 3 (*mostly or always*). For both scales of the ECR-R and DEQ residual scores were used, controlling for the shared variance with the other subscale of their respective measure.

*** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The process of separation-individuation is critical in an individual's development towards more independent functioning (Blos, 1967; Mahler, 1963). During this process a stronger sense of self and unique individuality should be obtained, while at the same time remaining connected to the family of origin (Allen et al., 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Disturbances in the process of separation-individuation might occur when no such balance between closeness and distance is obtained and when either the need for independence is focused upon at the expense of relatedness or vice versa. Although the process of separation-individuation may go awry in two different ways, dysfunctional separation-individuation has typically been defined as separation anxiety. That is, as an excessive emphasis on the need for relatedness and dependence on others. In the present study, it was argued and found that problematic separation-individuation can also be expressed as dysfunctional independence, where people avoid close relationships and have an exaggerated focus on self-governance.

Two Types of Dysfunctional Separation-Individuation

Although separation-individuation is a well-documented developmental process, research on disturbances of separation-individuation is comparatively more sparse. Given that successful resolution of the separation-individuation process is about finding a balance between individuality and connectedness, it seems logical to assume that problems can emerge when people develop an unhealthy preoccupation with either self-definition and individuality (i.e., dysfunctional independence) or with interpersonal relatedness (i.e., dysfunctional dependence; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994). We obtained strong evidence for the validity of this distinction between two types of problematic separation-individuation. Dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were found to share some common characteristics but also to relate to indices of personality and interpersonal functioning in a differentiated manner. Dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were both related substantially to a general measure of separation-

individuation pathology, suggesting that they can both be interpreted as expressions of a problematic resolution of the separation-individuation process. However, as expected, only dysfunctional dependence showed a strong resemblance with the DSM-based separation anxiety disorder. This finding illustrates the unilateral approach of disturbances in the separation-individuation process in the DSM, with the diagnostic criteria of separation anxiety disorder referring only to excessive levels of anxiety over being separated from a person or place. Dysfunctional independence has not yet been recognized in the DSM as a qualitatively different expression of disturbances in the separation-individuation process. Because Western societies highly value qualities like independence and individuality, this type of disturbed separation-individuation might be considered as less problematic than dysfunctional dependence in a Western context (Kagitçibasi, 2005). However, the fact that both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were positively associated with depressive symptoms indicates that practitioners should be alert for each of the two types of problematic separation-individuation as they both seem to have negative ramifications for personal well-being.

The distinction between dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence was further supported by the finding that both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation were associated differentially with the two major dimensions of attachment (i.e., anxiety and avoidance) and Blatt's dimensions of personality vulnerability to psychopathology (i.e., dependency and self-criticism). That is, whereas dysfunctional dependence was uniquely related to feelings of worry of not being loved by others (i.e., attachment anxiety), dysfunctional independence showed the strongest association with feelings of discomfort with closeness and dependency on others (i.e., attachment avoidance). In line with expectations, dysfunctional dependence also showed the strongest association with Blatt's dependent personality orientation, while dysfunctional independence was associated uniquely with self-criticism. Dysfunctional dependence showed a substantial relation with self-criticism as well, although this relationship was less pronounced than the association between dysfunctional

independence and self-criticism. Possibly, at least in some people, self-criticism may be undergirded by fear of being disapproved and critiqued, and of losing the approval and acceptance of others (Bagby et al., 1994; Blatt, 1974). Such a fear might explain why self-criticism is also associated with dysfunctional dependence.

Taken together, these results seem to confirm that dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence are two qualitatively different expressions of problematic separation-individuation. Although these types of disturbed separation-individuation are related to contrasting relationship styles, they represent two different solutions to deal with the fundamental problem of finding an optimal balance between closeness and independence (Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Bakken, 2009; Levitz-Jones & Orlofsky, 1985). Whereas dysfunctional dependence reflects the common image of problematic separation-individuation with excessive attempts to maintain close relationships with others, dysfunctional independence involves a pattern of dismissing intimate relationships to minimize the risk of merging with others. As such, none of these two expressions of dysfunctional separation-individuation seem to result in satisfying interpersonal relationships.

Although not the primary focus of this study, we obtained a number of interesting associations between background variables and the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. In line with a gender-specific point of view on relatedness and individuality, women appear more likely to express disturbances of the separation-individuation process in a dysfunctional dependent manner, whereas men seem to express these problems rather in a dysfunctional independent manner. Such findings are consistent with developmental theories on gender stereotypes in which it is claimed that socialization typically highlights the importance of independence and individuality for men and the importance of relatedness for women (Geuzaine, Debry, & Liessens, 2000; Gilligan, 1982; Surrey, 1991). Further, we found that emerging adults who were not involved in a partner relationship reported more dysfunctional independence. Individuals high on dysfunctional independence are indeed likely to be wary of committing

themselves in an enduring relationship because such a relationship might be considered as a threat to their excessively valued independence. In contrast, no association was found between relationship status and dysfunctional dependence. Because individuals high on dysfunctional dependence have an extreme need for unity with others, at least some of them may manage to build and maintain an enduring relationship. One may wonder, however, about the quality of the relationships of people high on dysfunctional dependence; because these individuals do not succeed in keeping a healthy balance between closeness and distance, their relationships might be characterized by issues of undue loyalty, separation anxiety, and jealousy. An interesting avenue for future research is to explore associations between the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation and relationship quality and interpersonal problems.

Profiles of Problematic Separation-Individuation

Given that dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence were found to be distinct expressions of problematic separation-individuation, our second aim was to examine how many profiles of separation-individuation could be identified on the basis of these two dimensions. We identified four interpretable clusters of separation-individuation. The first cluster, characterized by low scores on dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, was labeled *healthy*. As these individuals do not overly seek or dismiss close contact with others, they seem to have resolved the separation-individuation process in a healthy way, achieving a balance between closeness and distance (Allen et al., 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). In line with expectations, it was found that individuals in the healthy cluster displayed the least signs of psychopathology. Specifically, a profile of low dysfunctional dependence and low dysfunctional independence corresponded with low overall separation-individuation pathology, low separation anxiety, and low depressive symptompatology. Emerging adults in the healthy cluster also showed a pattern of secure attachment, with low anxiety and low avoidance, and they did not match Blatt's (1974, 2004) dependent or self-critical personality orientations.

The other three clusters had high scores on one or both of the dimensions of dysfunctional separation-individuation. The second cluster was characterized by exclusively elevated scores on dysfunctional dependence (i.e., *the dysfunctional dependent*), whereas the third cluster was characterized by high scores on dysfunctional independence (i.e., *the dysfunctional independent*). The final cluster included individuals with high scores on both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence and was labeled as *combined*. Contrary to expectations the combined group did not demonstrate the most signs of ill-being, as individuals with a dysfunctional dependent, dysfunctional independent, and combined separation-individuation profile showed equally elevated symptoms of general separation-individuation pathology, the DSM separation anxiety disorder and depression. The non-clinical nature of our sample might account for these results as mean scores on all variables related to ill-being were fairly low. Possibly, scores in a clinical sample would be higher and more heterogeneous. In such a sample with more variation in the ill-being outcomes, between-cluster differences might be even more pronounced and the combined group in particular might display an even more maladaptive profile of outcomes compared to the other clusters.

Still, with respect to attachment and personality orientation some meaningful differences did emerge between the three profiles of dysfunctional separation-individuation. For instance, emerging adults in the dysfunctional dependent cluster showed a pattern of high attachment anxiety and a dependent personality, whereas those in the dysfunctional independent cluster showed high discomfort with closeness and dependency on others (i.e., attachment avoidance) in combination with a self-critical personality. Although dysfunctional independent emerging adults demonstrated low attachment anxiety, their scores were still significantly higher than those in the healthy cluster, which may suggest that dysfunctional independent expressions of problematic separation-individuation too are to some extent provoked by underlying feelings of anxiety when confronted with separation and loss (Årseth et al., 2009; Levitz-Jones & Orlofsky, 1985). Finally, individuals in the combined cluster demonstrated

among the highest levels of fear of abandonment and rejection (i.e., attachment anxiety) and they had elevated scores on both the dependent and self-critical personality dimensions. Past research has shown that people who combine high levels of both dimensions of personality vulnerability are most at risk for psychopathology, and for depression in particular (Blatt, Quinlan, Chevron, McDonald, & Zuroff, 1982). As such, this finding suggests at least indirectly that a combination of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence creates a stronger vulnerability to psychopathology compared to the presence of one of the types of dysfunctional separation-individuation alone. Contrary to expectations, emerging adults with a combined profile of dysfunctional separation-individuation did not show elevated scores on attachment avoidance. However, the fact that this cluster comprises individuals with high scores on dysfunctional dependence and only moderate scores on dysfunctional independence might possibly explain why avoidance of closeness is less pronounced in this group.

To sum up, it seems that people may express disturbances in the process of separation-individuation either in a purely dependent or independent manner or in a rather combined way. Combined dysfunctional dependent and independent individuals seem to alternate between an excessive need for close contact and fears of interpersonal rejection. This pattern of attraction versus repulsion somewhat resembles the interpersonal functioning associated with borderline personality disorder (Dolan et al., 1992) and future research may examine whether the combined profile of separation-individuation is indeed associated with (features of) borderline personality.

Limitations

Although this study revealed some interesting findings on the nature of dysfunctional separation-individuation, a number of limitations should be noted. First, findings of this study are based on a nonrepresentative sample of emerging adults. Although our sampling procedure resulted in a group of participants covering a broad age range of the emerging adult period and with substantial

variability in gender and residential status, we mainly sampled emerging adults from White, well-educated, and intact families. As such, it remains to be examined whether our results can be generalized to a broader population of emerging adults, which is for instance more diverse in terms of educational background, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. In addition, it would be meaningful to examine whether our findings could be replicated in non-Western societies. Can both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence be distinguished as two qualitatively separate outcomes of disturbances in the separation-individuation process in more collectivistic cultures, and are they both related to adverse outcomes? Given that relatedness is valued over independence in these cultures (Kagitçibasi, 2005), it could be the case that excessive dependence on others is not considered as problematic and is less strongly associated with maladjustment as compared to the West.

Second, we used a non-clinical sample of emerging adults. Consequently, the means on all study variables were rather low in the present study. However, as we mainly aimed to demonstrate that dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence are related differentially to other relevant constructs, these low scores did not hinder us to provide evidence for the distinction between two types of problematic separation-individuation. Yet, future research would do well to examine disturbances in the separation-individuation process in clinical samples. This would allow us to explore (1) whether this typology of dysfunctional separation-individuation can be distinguished in a clinical population, (2) how dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence are manifested in clinical samples, and (3) whether these dimensions of problematic separation-individuation display comorbidity with particular mental disorders.

Third, although a considerable number of participants was included in our sample (N = 232), some power issues emerged when making between-group comparisons across the different clusters of subjects, demonstrating a similar profile on both dimensions of dysfunctional separation-individuation. That is, the total sample was cut down into four subsamples ranging from a minimum of 41

to a maximum of 85 participants. As such, some meaningful differences between the different clusters in terms of psychopathology, attachment or personality orientation could not be interpreted as significant. Hence, future research with larger samples is needed, in order to capture how subjects with different separation-individuation profiles exactly differ from one another.

Fourth, findings are exclusively based on emerging adults' self-reports. Due to the disadvantages associated with self-report methodology, such as shared method variance and reporting bias, the observed strength of relationships between variables may have been artificially elevated. Future studies can try to overcome these problems by including multiple informants (e.g., parents, partners, friends, therapists) to report on emerging adults' interpersonal functioning and personality or by using more diverse methods (e.g., observation, interview) to measure the concepts in this study. Besides questionnaire data, future research could use observational methods to measure issues of separation-individuation. The autonomy and relatedness coding system for instance, which measures promotion or inhibition of autonomy and relatedness during a family interaction task (Allen, et al., 1994; Allen, et al., 2002), might be an appropriate alternative for questionnaire data.

Fifth, we made a couple of small adjustments to the SITA scales used in this study (i.e., Separation Anxiety and Dependency Denial) that were mainly data-driven. Future research should confirm these adjustments, and particularly whether the Dependency Denial scale is better off without the item "Often I don't understand what people want out of a close relationship with me". Furthermore, including other scales of the SITA might be instructive when studying manifestations of problematic separation-individuation and when comparing groups demonstrating different profiles of such problematic separation-individuation. Including the Healthy Separation-Individuation scale might be particularly important to validate the label we used to identify the group of participants scoring low on both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation (i.e., the healthy group).

Finally, the cross-sectional study design does not allow us to examine the developmental trajectory leading to problematic separation-individuation. Longitudinal research, examining the entire course of this process, is needed when we want to draw definite conclusions about possible antecedents and outcomes of disturbances in the separation-individuation process. Such a longitudinal design would for instance allow us to determine the direction of effects in the hypothesized relationships between our study variables. For example, should an insecure attachment style or a dimension of personality vulnerability be considered as a precursor, or rather as a consequence of a pathological separation-individuation process?

Conclusion

In this study we argued and found that problematic separation-individuation may manifest in at least two qualitatively distinct ways, that is, as a tendency to excessively seek closeness to others (i.e., dysfunctional dependence) or as a tendency to be strongly preoccupied with individuality and to avoid any kind of connectedness (i.e., dysfunctional independence). For both clinical practice and future research it is important to become aware that, besides manifestations of dysfunctional dependence, dysfunctional independence can also point to disturbances in the process of separation-individuation. As both types of disturbed separation-individuation were found to be differentially related with personality features and aspects of interpersonal functioning, both might have their own specific developmental trajectory, requiring other diagnostic criteria and therapeutic interventions.

Chapter 8

Parental psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation: A tale of two different dynamics[1]

This study examined associations between psychologically controlling parenting and two possible manifestations of problematic separation-individuation (i.e., dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence). To explain these associations, it has been argued that psychological control is an inherently independence-stifling parenting dimension that gives rise to a dysfunctional dependent orientation. In this study, it was argued that psychological control may relate to dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, depending on whether parents' use of psychological control is driven by issues of interpersonal closeness (i.e., dependency-oriented psychological control) or by issues of achievement (i.e., achievement-oriented psychological control). A Belgian sample of 232 emerging adults, involved in the process of home leaving, and their parents completed self-report questionnaires. Regression analyses indicated that domain-specific expressions of psychological control were related differentially to dysfunctional dependent and dysfunctional independent manifestations of problematic separation-individuation. Emerging adults' residential status did not moderate these associations. Implications and directions for future research are discussed.

[1]Kins, E., Soenens, B., & Beyers, W. (in press). Parental psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation: A tale of two different dynamics. *Journal of Adolescence.*

Separation-individuation is an important developmental process that takes prominence during a couple of life phases, including infancy, adolescence, and emerging adulthood. This developmental process has major repercussions for individuals' socio-emotional adjustment and identity. Research indeed shows that, when the separation-individuation process goes wrong, individuals display difficulties in establishing their identity, personal ill-being, and interpersonal problems (Dolan, Evans, & Norton, 1992; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Given the maladaptive developmental outcomes associated with dysfunctional separation-individuation, it is important to identify possible developmental antecedents of dysfunctional separation-individuation. It has been argued that an intrusive and psychologically controlling parenting climate may be involved in problems dealing with the separation-individuation process (Barber, 1996; Wood, 2006). However, empirical research on the presumed association between parental psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation is scarce. This study wants to add to this limited body of work by providing a detailed picture of associations between parental psychological control and problematic manifestations of the separation-individuation process during emerging adulthood. Specifically, it was examined whether two qualitatively different types of parental psychological control (i.e., dependency-oriented psychological control and achievement-oriented psychological control) would relate differentially to two possible dysfunctional outcomes of the separation-individuation process (i.e., dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence). These hypotheses were investigated in a sample of emerging adults because the process of separation-individuation is highly salient during this developmental period (Tanner, 2006). Because many emerging adults are involved in the process of leaving the parental home, it was additionally explored whether the residential status of young people would moderate associations between parental psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation.

Problematic Separation-Individuation in Emerging Adulthood

Separation-individuation revolves around the resolution of a relational tension between distance and connectedness (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Smollar & Youniss, 1989). It is considered a fundamental organizing principle of human growth that has implications for adaptive functioning across the life span, with specific developmental challenges in early childhood and adolescence/emerging adulthood (Lapsley & Stey, 2010). During infancy, this process involves the child's first steps towards a more separate and independent functioning. A first sense of identity is created through the establishment of stable intrapsychic representations of the self and the caregiver. These mental representations keep the caregiver emotionally available to the child and supply comfort when the caregiver is absent (Mahler, 1963; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). In adolescence and emerging adulthood, these infantile conceptions are relinquished in order to create a sense of self that is distinct and individuated from parental object representations (Blos, 1967). From this notion, it is clear that the separation-individuation process not simply reflects a redefinition of the self but also a redefinition of the relationship with the parents. Young people are challenged to transform their hierarchical child-like relationship with the parents into a more mutual relationship between equal adults (Aquilino, 1997).

Although the formation of an adult relationship with the parents was initially situated in late adolescence (Levy-Warren, 1999), this redefinition of the parent-child relationship nowadays typically continues beyond adolescence into emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Today's Western postindustrial societies are characterized by a general delay in the transition to adulthood. As a result, the prolonged period between adolescence and adulthood has become a separate phase in life denoted as *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2000; 2004). Emerging adulthood involves the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a specific focus on the period between 18 and 25 years. One of the most distinguishing features of this stage is the frequent change and intensive exploration in various life domains without making stable commitments (Arnett, 2000). The period of emerging adulthood is considered a critical turning point in

the human life span during which young people make the transition from dependent adolescents to independent young adults and during which parent-regulation is gradually replaced with self-regulated behavior (Tanner, 2006). Hence, the process of separation-individuation is clearly not terminated in adolescence but instead accelerates in emerging adulthood. Particularly, when emerging adults move out of the parental home, a dramatic shift in the balance of power in the relationship with parents is believed to occur (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Research has yielded some evidence for this assumption, as the act of home leaving was found to facilitate the transformation of the parent-child relationship towards mutuality (Aquilino, 1997; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). As there is a tendency for young people to live longer in the parental home since the 1980s (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; White, 2002), it is possible that continued coresidence with parents in emerging adulthood is associated with more problematic separation-individuation. However, in a previous study, using a general measure for separation-individuation pathology, no relationship was found between emerging adults' residential status and pathology of the separation-individuation process (Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2011). Perhaps research using a more differentiated measure of problematic separation-individuation might reveal some differences.

Given that separation-individuation is about the resolution of a complex dialectical interaction between independence and relatedness, it has been argued that disturbances in this process may manifest in at least two qualitatively different ways (Kins, Beyers, & Soenens, in press, Kruse & Walper, 2008; Levine & Saintonge, 1993; McClanahan & Holmbeck, 1992). Specifically, problematic separation-individuation may occur when the need for relatedness is stressed at the expense of the need for independence and vice versa. A dysfunctional dependent orientation would reflect a tendency to excessively seek closeness to others at the expense of achieving independence, whereas a dysfunctional independent orientation would reflect a tendency to be strongly preoccupied with individuality and to avoid any kind of connectedness. Kins et al. (in press) recently provided empirical evidence for the distinction between

these two types of problematic separation-individuation. For instance, they found that whereas dysfunctional dependence was related primarily to attachment anxiety (i.e., an orientation involving fear of loss and separation anxiety in relationships), dysfunctional independence was related primarily to attachment avoidance (i.e., an orientation where people keep others at a distance and avoid intimacy). Herein, we forward the possibility that emerging adults who continue to live in the parental household are more likely to display problems in the process of separation-individuation of the dysfunctional dependent type. In that case, continued coresidence with parents could be interpreted as an attempt to maintain closeness with parents driven by separation anxiety. Conversely, individuals with a dysfunctional independent orientation express an excessive urge for independence and may thus be leaving the parental home earlier. Accordingly, we aimed to examine whether emerging adults who live independently score higher on dysfunctional independence and lower on dysfunctional dependence than emerging adults who still live with their parents.

Because the process of separation-individuation unfolds within the family context, the family's tolerance for independence and individuality is expected to play an important role in the resolution of this developmental task. For instance, in a family atmosphere where separation and individuation are viewed as a betrayal to the family or as a threat to its stability, individuals may be forced to sacrifice independence for relatedness. One specific feature of parenting that may interfere with the process of separation-individuation is psychological control (Barber, 1996; Mayseless & Scharf, 2009).

Two Types of Parental Psychological Control

In research on socialization and parenting, psychological control is increasingly acknowledged as an important dimension of parenting style (Barber, Stoltz, & Olson, 2005). Psychological control is characteristic of parents who are nonresponsive to their child's needs and who instead use intrusive and manipulative tactics (e.g., guilt induction, shaming, and love withdrawal) to pressure their child to meet the parents' standards (Barber, 1996). Research has

consistently shown that psychological control is related to adverse developmental outcomes in children, adolescents, and emerging adults, including depression, anxiety, and maladaptive perfectionism (Barber, 1996; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010).

To explain the maladaptive outcomes associated with psychological control, it has been argued that it may be detrimental to the developmental process of separation-individuation. Specifically, psychological control has typically been described as inherently independence stifling, meaning that it would restrict the space necessary for a child to explore and express his/her individuality (Barber, 1996, 2002). Thus, parental psychological control would make children emotionally and psychologically dependent on the parent, such that children become excessively loyal to their parents and become vulnerable to symptoms of separation anxiety (e.g., Barber, 1996; Wood, 2006). On the basis of this reasoning, one might predict an association between psychological control and dysfunctional dependence. There is already some empirical support for this prediction. Wood (2006), for instance, found in a sample of 6-13 year old children that psychologically controlling parents was related to separation anxiety (i.e., a key manifestation of dysfunctional dependence). To the best of our knowledge, similar evidence in emerging adulthood is largely lacking.

Further, in addition to the association between psychological control and dysfunctional dependence, there are reasons to believe that psychological control might just as well relate to an orientation of dysfunctional independence. Mayseless and Scharf (2009) recently found that a family climate characterized by guilt induction and psychological control was related to separation-individuation difficulties of both the dysfunctional dependent and dysfunctional independent type. Herein we forward the hypothesis that psychological control may relate to both dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, depending on the domain in which parents use psychological control. Consistent with this argument, recent research has differentiated between two domain-specific expressions of psychological control, one revolving around issues of interpersonal closeness (i.e., dependency-oriented psychological control) and one

revolving around issues of personal achievement and perfectionism (i.e., achievement-oriented psychological control; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Luyten, 2010). Parents high on dependency-oriented psychological control (DPC) use intrusive tactics as a means to keep their children within close physical and emotional boundaries. In contrast, parents high on achievement-oriented psychological control (APC) engage in intrusive parenting tactics to make children comply with parental standards for achievement and individual performance.

As dependency-oriented controlling parents do not allow their children to have experience with independent action and instead pressure their children to remain in close physical and emotional proximity, children are likely to develop an excessive focus on relatedness with their parents at the expense of exploring their individuality. As such, they are likely to consider being alone as a threat and to develop a separation-anxious orientation. Hence, it is hypothesized in this study that DPC would relate primarily to the dependent type of dysfunctional separation-individuation. Some indirect evidence for this reasoning has been obtained in Soenens et al. (2010), who found that DPC was related to a dependent personality orientation. In contrast, we reasoned that separation-individuation disturbances of the independent type might develop in a family climate where love and acceptance are made contingent upon meeting strict parental demands for achievement. As children interiorize their parents' emphasis on achievement and perfection, they might become preoccupied with demonstrating their personal ability, thereby ignoring the need for closeness and relatedness (Blatt & Homann, 1992; Flett, Hewitt, Oliver, & MacDonald, 2002). Thus, we hypothesized that APC would be primarily related to dysfunctional independence. Consistent with this reasoning, it has been shown that APC is related to a self-critical and perfectionist orientation in children and adolescents (e.g., Elliot & Thrash, 2004; Kenney-Benson & Pomerantz, 2005; Soenens et al., 2010). Self-critical perfectionism, in turn, has been argued to involve a preoccupation with personal achievement at the expense of satisfying interpersonal relationships (e.g., Blatt, 1995; Hamachek, 1978).

Although there is evidence that parenting in emerging adulthood is linked to various child outcomes (Aquilino, 2006; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011), it remains to be examined whether parents' influence is different for emerging adults who live away from their parents compared to emerging adults who co-reside with their parents. Possibly, emerging adults who permanently live in the parental home are affected more strongly by their parents' rearing styles than young people who have already taken steps towards independent living. Therefore, we additionally explored whether emerging adults' residential status would moderate the hypothesized relationships between DPC, APC, and the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation.

The Present Study

The main goal of this study was to investigate how psychologically controlling parenting relates to disturbances in the separation-individuation process. Specifically, we aimed to examine whether two domain-specific expressions of parental psychological control (i.e., DPC and APC) are related differentially to dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence in a sample of emerging adults and their parents. Because we included both emerging adults and parents, the construct of parental psychological control could be measured with a multi-informant approach, using both emerging adult and parent reports on the two domain-specific types of psychological control. We focused specifically on emerging adults because the separation-individuation process is highly salient during emerging adulthood and because research has suggested that parents remain an important source of influence for the child's psychosocial development during this stage in life (Aquilino, 2006; Nelson et al., 2011). In view of the fact that emerging adults tend to live increasingly longer in the parental home (Cherlin, et al., 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994), it was additionally examined whether emerging adults' residential status moderates the hypothesized association between the two types of parental psychological control and the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. We were specifically interested to explore whether associations were stronger for

emerging adults who still lived in the parental home in comparison to emerging adults who have already taken steps towards independent living.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study was conducted in Belgium. Participants were 232 emerging adults aged between 21 and 26 years and their parents. Because the home-leaving process is salient during this stage in life, this age group was considered particularly interesting for the current study. Families were recruited through undergraduate psychology students as part of a course on developmental psychology. Each student was asked to contact two families with an emerging adult that had to meet certain criteria. In the first family the emerging adult had to be between 21 and 23 years old and in the second family the emerging adult had to be between 24 and 26 years old. Moreover, one emerging adult needed to be female, the other male. As a result, we obtained a sample with an almost equal number of men (n = 115) and women (n = 117) and covering a broad age segment of the emerging adult period. The mean age of the total sample of emerging adults was 23 years and 7 months (SD = 1 year, 9 months). Most of them were highly educated (i.e., 75% followed post-secondary education), and came from intact families (i.e., 79%). At the time of data gathering, 43% of the participants lived permanently in the parental household, whereas 31% lived fully independent. The other 26% lived in a semi-independent type of a living situation, which means that they lived away from their parents but returned to the parental home on a regular basis. More than half of the emerging adults (i.e., 62%) reported to be involved in a romantic relationship. A large majority of mothers (i.e., 99%) and fathers (i.e., 91%) agreed to take part in this study as well, resulting in a sample of 442 parents. Mothers were on average 50 years (SD = 4 years), whereas fathers were on average two years older (M = 52 years; SD = 4 years). Both mothers and fathers had an average of 14 years of education, reflecting two more years of education beyond high school.

Emerging adults and parents who agreed to take part in this study received questionnaires that were completed during a home visit. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed. The number of missing values in this data set was small (i.e., 2%) and according to Little's test these data were missing completely at random (MCAR), $\chi^2(217, N = 232) = 183.60$, *ns*. Therefore, the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm was used to obtain maximum likelihood estimates for the missing values (Schafer, 1997). Hence, $N = 232$ in all further analyses.

Measures

Domain-specific psychological control. Both emerging adults and their parents were asked to fill out the Dependency-Oriented and Achievement-Oriented Psychological Control Scale (DAPCS; Soenens et al., 2010). Emerging adults rated their mothers and fathers separately on this scale, whereas parents had to report on their own parenting behavior. Items of both the DPC and APC subscale were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). A sample item of the DPC subscale in the emerging adult version reads: "My mother/father is only happy with me if I rely exclusively on her/him for advice". In the parent version, a sample item of the APC scale reads "I'm less attentive to my son/daughter when he/she does not perform to the fullest of his/her potential". The reliability and convergent and divergent validity of the DAPCS have been demonstrated by Soenens et al. (2010). In this study, Cronbach's alpha of the DPC scale was .87 for maternal ratings and .80 for paternal ratings in the emerging adults' version. For mothers and fathers, Cronbach's alpha was .79 and .83, respectively. For the APC scale, alphas for the emerging adult were .92 when reporting about mothers and .95 when reporting about fathers. For mothers and fathers, Cronbach's alphas were .89 and .87, respectively.

Dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence. To measure dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, we asked emerging adults to complete the Separation Anxiety scale and the Dependency

Denial scale from the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA; Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986). These scales were identified by Kins et al. (in press) as valid indicators of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, respectively. Items are scored on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all)* to 5 (*totally applies)*. The Separation Anxiety subscale consists of 8 items referring to a strong fear of abandonment and loss of important others. A sample item reads: "I worry about being disapproved of by others". This subscale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$). The 13 items of the Dependency Denial subscale reflect dysfunctional strivings for independence as a kind of defensive style against feelings of anxiety associated with separation (e.g., "I don't really need anyone"). Because one of the items of this subscale ("Often I don't understand what people want out of a close relationship with me") showed a substantial cross-loading (> .40) on the separation anxiety subscale, we decided to remove this item in our analyses. Cronbach's alpha of the remaining 12 items of the dependency denial subscale was .76.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

We first conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) to explore whether some relevant background variables were associated with the study variables and should be controlled for in our main analysis. In this analysis, the study variables served as dependent variables. Independent variables were gender, family structure (i.e., intact vs. nonintact), and relationship status (i.e., having a partner or not). Age was entered as a covariate. Significant multivariate effects emerged for gender, $F(10, 218) = 2.63$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$, and relationship status, $F(10, 218) = 3.05$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Follow-up univariate analyses indicated gender differences for dysfunctional dependence ($F(1, 227) = 5.08$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$) and for dysfunctional independence ($F(1, 227) = 11.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$). That is, whereas emerging adult women had significantly higher scores on dysfunctional dependence ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .07$) in comparison to men ($M = 2.70$,

SD = .07), emerging adult men scored significantly higher on dysfunctional independence (*M* = 1.88, *SD* = .04) than women (*M* = 1.70, *SD* = .05). Second, emerging adults involved in a partner relationship reported significantly lower scores on dysfunctional independence (*M* = 1.70, *SD* = .04) than their single peers (*M* = 1.89, *SD* = .05) ($F(1, 227) = 13.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$). In addition, when emerging adults had no partner their fathers reported significantly higher levels of DPC (*M* = 1.89, *SD* = .05) than fathers of emerging adults with a partner (*M* = 1.76, *SD* = .04) ($F(1, 227) = 4.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Given these results, it was decided to control for the effects of gender and relationship status in the main analyses.

In a next step, it was explored whether the two distinguished manifestations dysfunctional separation-individuation differed across emerging adults' residential status. For this purpose, we conducted a MANOVA with dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence as dependent variables and emerging adults' residential status as independent variable. To control for the effects of gender and relationship status, we added these variables as predictors to the model. Results showed no significant multivariate effect of emerging adults' residential status $F(4,452) = 1.44$, *ns*. Emerging adults' scores on both dysfunctional dependence ($M_{Parents} = 2.78$, *SD* = .07; $M_{Semi} = 2.81$, *SD* = .08; $M_{Independent} = 2.67$, *SD* = .08) and dysfunctional independence ($M_{Parents} = 1.70$, *SD* = .04; $M_{Semi} = 1.70$, *SD* = .05; $M_{Independent} = 1.82$, *SD* = .05) did not differ significantly depending on their residential status.

Primary Analyses

Correlations. Correlations between the study variables can be found in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, although both DPC and APC were related to the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation, there was a tendency for DPC to be more strongly related to dysfunctional dependence and for APC to be more strongly related to dysfunctional independence.

Regressions. As also shown in Table 1, DPC and APC are significantly correlated. In order to obtain a clear picture of the differential associations of

Table 1

Correlations between the Study Variables

Measure	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
DPC									
1. EA about Mother									
2. EA about Father	.52***								
3. Mother Report	.20**	.19**							
4. Father Report	.13*	.28***	.38***						
APC									
5. EA about Mother	.58***	.40***	.17**	.17**					
6. EA about Father	.47***	.52***	.07	.22**	.60***				
7. Mother Report	.20**	.15*	.31***	.14*	.32***	.18**			
8. Father Report	.15*	.29***	.19**	.49***	.27***	.42***	.24***		
9. Dysfunctional dependence	.24***	.23***	.16*	.22**	.14*	.19**	-.02	.21**	
10. Dysfunctional independence	.31***	.19**	.09	.03	.32***	.33***	.17*	.14*	.09

Notes. EA = Emerging Adult; DPC = Dependency-oriented Psychological Control, APC = Achievement-oriented Psychological Control.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

DPC and APC with the types of dysfunctional separation-individuation, it was deemed important to control for the variance shared between DPC and APC. For this purpose, we performed a series of regression analyses. In each of the analyses, DPC and APC were entered simultaneously as explanatory variables of dysfunctional dependence or dysfunctional independence, respectively. We controlled for the effects of gender and relationship status by also including them as explanatory variables in the model. Models were ran separately for maternal and paternal ratings of DPC and APC. Because the correlations among the raters on the psychological control variables were moderate (i.e., APC > .30) to low (i.e., for DPC < .30), they were also ran separately for emerging adult and parent reports of DPC and APC, resulting in four regression analyses for each of the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. The somewhat stronger cross-informant correspondence for APC may be due to the fact that pressuring parenting techniques for reasons of achievement and performance are perhaps more manifest and visible than intrusive parenting revolving around issues of closeness. Moreover, emerging adults and parents might think of DPC in different ways. For instance whereas parents might still consider their behavior as legitimate, emerging adults may feel restrained in their need for independence and pressured to remain in close proximity to the parents.

Results of the four regression analyses are displayed in Table 2. When predicting dysfunctional dependence, parental DPC was found to be a unique predictor in 3 out of 4 cases. DPC was unrelated to dysfunctional dependence in the model with fathers' ratings of DPC. When predicting dysfunctional independence, parental APC was found to be a significant predictor in 3 out of 4 cases. APC was unrelated to dysfunctional independence in the model with mothers' ratings of APC. An unexpected finding was that, in the model for emerging adults' ratings of their mothers, DPC and APC were independent predictors of dysfunctional independence. This finding was an exception to the overall pattern, however, where DPC was related most strongly to dysfunctional dependence and where APC was related most strongly to dysfunctional independence.

Table 2

Regression Analyses Predicting Types of Dysfunctional Separation-Individuation with Dependency- and Achievement Oriented Psychological Controlling Parenting

	Type of Dysfunctional Separation-Individuation					
	Dysfunctional Dependence			Dysfunctional Independence		
Predictor	β	R^2	$F_{(4, 227)}$	β	R^2	$F_{(4, 227)}$
Mother						
EA report		.08	5.24***		.20	14.09***
Gender	.16*			–.19**		
Partner	–.07			–.20**		
DPC	.22**			.17*		
APC	.03			.18*		
Mother report		.05	3.13*		.12	7.80***
Gender	.13*			–.21***		
Partner	–.08			–.21***		
DPC	.16*			.06		
APC	–.07			.10		
Father						
EA report		.10	6.02***		.20	14.43***
Gender	.17**			–.18***		
Partner	–.09			–.24***		
DPC	.16*			.01		
APC	.13			.31***		
Father report		.08	4.87***		.13	8.40***
Gender	.12			–.22***		
Partner	–.06			–.23***		
DPC	.14			–.08		
APC	.13			.19**		

Notes. EA = Emerging Adult, DPC = Dependency-oriented Psychological Control, APC = Achievement-oriented Psychological Control. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. Partner: 0 = not having a partner, 1 = having a partner.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Moderation. Next, we investigated whether emerging adults' residential status moderates the paths between both domains of parental psychological control and the two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. For this purpose, we reran the above-mentioned series of regression analyses, but this time we added interaction terms to account for the possible moderating effect of emerging adults' residential status. Given that emerging adults' residential status is a categorical variable comprising three different groups (i.e., co-residing with parents, semi-independent, and fully independent), we first had to recode this variable into two dichotomous dummy variables: DUM1 (co-residing with parents versus semi-independent) and DUM2 (co-residing with parents versus independent). To correct for issues of multicollinearity, all predictor variables (i.e., the two dummy-coded, DPC, and APC) were standardized before computing the interaction terms. Interaction terms were computed by multiplying the standardized dummies with the standardized scores for DPC and APC. In each of the regression analyses, the main effects of the predictor variables, as well as 4 interaction terms (i.e., DUM1*DPC, DUM2*DPC, DUM1*APC, DUM2*APC) were simultaneously entered as explanatory variables of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence. To control for the effects of gender and relationship status, these variables were also entered in the model. Again, all models were ran separately for maternal and paternal ratings of psychological control and separately for emerging adult and parent reports of DPC and APC. This procedure resulted in a total of 32 interaction terms being tested for their level of significance.

Results revealed that only 2 of the 32 interaction terms reached significance, that is the interaction of DUM1 with fathers' reports of DPC in the prediction of dysfunctional dependence ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$) and the interaction of DUM1 with fathers' reports of APC in the prediction of dysfunctional independence ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .01$). Further inspection of these interaction effects revealed that the association of paternal DPC and APC with respectively dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence is different for emerging adults who co-reside with parents compared to emerging adults who

live semi-independently. Whereas both types of paternal psychological control contributed to dysfunctional separation-individuation when emerging adults live in the parental home, this was effect was less pronounced for semi-independently living emerging adults. All main effects of DPC and APC found in the previous series of regressions analyses remained significant when adding the interaction terms to the model. Moreover, father's reports of DPC were now also found to be predictive of dysfunctional dependence ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$). In sum, given that interaction effects were not systematically found and that the previously obtained main effects of DPC and APC on both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation remained significant, it was concluded that emerging adults' type of residential status did not systematically moderate the effects of both maternal and paternal DPC and APC on dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence.

Curvilinear associations. In a final step we tested for the possibility that the associations between DPC and dysfunctional dependence and the associations between APC and dysfunctional independence would be curvilinear rather than linear in nature. One may wonder, for instance, whether psychological control is primarily problematic at high or extreme levels. To test for curvilinear effects, we centered the scores on DPC and APC and computed quadratic terms on the basis of these centered scores. In a set of regression analyses, where DPC and APC were simultaneously entered as explanatory variables of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence, we examined whether the quadratic terms added to the prediction of dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence beyond the effect of the standardized main effects of DPC and APC. Regression analyses were again performed separately for maternal and paternal ratings of psychological control and separately for emerging adult and parent reports on the psychological control variables. This resulted in a total of 8 regression analyses (4 for each of the two dependent variables), each including 2 quadratic terms (i.e., one for DPC and one for APC). Only 2 out of 16 quadratic terms reached significance, that is, the quadratic term of emerging adults' report on paternal DPC in the prediction of dysfunctional dependence ($\beta = –.16$, $p <$

.05) and the quadratic term of emerging adults' report on paternal APC in the prediction of dysfunctional independence ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$). The negative coefficient of the quadratic terms suggests that the relationship between paternal psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation follows an inverse U-shaped curve. By means of categorizing the participants into a low, medium and high group of psychological control on the basis of a tertile split on the scores for paternal DPC and paternal APC, we obtained a clearer picture about these curvilinear associations between psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation. In both cases, the strongest association between psychological control and dysfunctional separation-individuation was at the low end of the continuum of psychological control. At higher levels of psychological control, the association seemed to level off. These findings suggest that a little bit of psychological control may already suffice to increase the odds of reporting difficulties with separation-individuation. It should be noted, however, that only 2 out of 16 possible curvilinear associations were significant. Accordingly, most associations were linear in nature.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the idea that a psychologically controlling parenting climate may interfere with the development of separation-individuation (Barber, 1996). They are in line with results from recent studies showing that psychological control is related to separation-individuation pathology (e.g., Kins et al., 2011; Mayseless & Sharf, 2009). The present study, however, extends these findings, as it is the first to indicate that domain-specific expressions of psychological control are related differentially to dysfunctional dependent and dysfunctional independent manifestations of problematic separation-individuation. In line with our expectations, we found that dependency-oriented psychological control was primarily related to dysfunctional dependence. Thus, when parents use intrusive and manipulative tactics to keep their child physically and emotionally close to them, the emerging adult is more likely to report a strong fear of abandonment and loss of important

others when going through the separation-individuation process. As these parents curtail their child's independent functioning, children have little experience with handling things on their own and become overly dependent on others (Soenens et al., 2010; Wood, 2006). Although this pathway is consistent with descriptions of psychological control as being an inherently independence-stifling parenting strategy, our data also suggest that this is not the only possible pathway linking psychological control to disturbed separation-individuation. In particular, parental achievement-oriented psychological control was related primarily to a dysfunctional independent orientation. When parents' love and attention is conditional upon meeting parental standards for achievement, children might strive for personal success while denying their need for relatedness (Blatt & Homann, 1992; Flett et al., 2002). Specifically, parents who pressure their children to achieve may, implicitly or explicitly, communicate to their children that it is important to demonstrate one's personal ability. Such a demonstration of personal ability is achieved best by dealing with competence-relevant tasks independently; if one is able to successfully complete a task without assistance of others (i.e., independently), one's personal ability is highlighted more strongly compared to when one collaborates with others. Thus, children of parents high on achievement-oriented psychological control are likely to learn that the pursuit of individual and independent achievement is the royal route to achieve a sense of self-worth, even if such a pursuit has a cost in terms of collaboration and close interpersonal relationships.

Although not a primary aim of this study, it is interesting to mention that the relationships between both domains of psychological control and the two types of problematic separation-individuation were generally linear rather than curvilinear in nature. Contrary to the idea that there is a cutoff point at which parental psychological control becomes problematic, this parenting dimension shows a continuous relation with adverse developmental outcomes (see also Soenens et al., 2010). Hence, although higher levels of psychological control are associated with more maladjustment, even low to moderate levels of parental psychological control might be detrimental for a child's well-being. This finding

is consistent with the broader phenomenon in psychology that "bad is stronger than good" (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). One common observation in psychology is indeed that negatively valenced events have a strong impact. Accordingly, although the frequency of psychologically controlling parenting behavior may be generally low, instances where psychological control does occur may be highly salient and, because of their salience, may impact on children's functioning quite strongly. The use of psychological control should thus be discouraged, especially since the results of the present study indicate that its maladaptive effects even continue to exist in emerging adulthood. Treatment interventions with parents should instead promote autonomy-supportive parenting, a parenting dimension that is largely opposite to psychologically controlling parenting (Grolnick, 2003). Contrary to controlling parents, who pressure their children into compliance through intrusive and manipulative tactics, autonomy-supportive parents take the child's perspective, allow choices whenever possible and refrain from controlling language (Grolnick, 2003). Abundant research has demonstrated that autonomy-supportive parenting behavior is beneficial for adolescents' and emerging adults' well-being and adjustment (e.g., Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Niemiec et al., 2006).

It should be noted that the findings in our study were somewhat less straightforward when using parent reports of parental psychological control compared to emerging adults' reports. It is not uncommon in parenting research that child reports of parenting are more strongly related to developmental outcomes than parent reports of parenting. Still, the general pattern of findings was consistent with expectations. Moreover, although somewhat unexpected, the results obtained with the parent reports point to the interesting possibility of a differential role for mothers and fathers. Specifically, in the models using parent reports, maternal dependency-oriented psychological control was related to dysfunctional dependence but maternal achievement-oriented psychological control was unrelated to dysfunctional independence. In contrast, only paternal use of achievement-oriented psychological control was related to dysfunctional

independence and paternal dependency-oriented psychological control was unrelated to dysfunctional dependence. These findings seem to suggest that dependency-oriented psychological control is more salient for mothers whereas achievement-oriented psychological control would be more salient for fathers. It has indeed been argued and shown before that mothers' use of psychological control would revolve relatively more often around interpersonal issues and that fathers' use of psychological control would, on average, be more strongly driven by issues of high performance and achievement (Soenens et al., 2010). As such, mothers could be more strongly involved in the development of dysfunctional dependence, whereas fathers could be involved relatively more strongly in the development of dysfunctional independence. Further research is however needed to investigate this line of reasoning in greater detail, as well as to clarify the direction of this hypothesized relationship.

Because findings were explored in a sample of emerging adults, we additionally took into account the role of emerging adults' residential status. Whereas children used to live with their parents until they got married and started a family of their own, young people can nowadays find themselves in a variety of living arrangements. An increasing number of young people for instance continues to live with the parents or returns to the parental household after a period of independent living (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994). Others might move out to cohabit with a partner or friend. Because there is some empirical evidence that the demographic trend of continued coresidence with parents might have implications for the separation-individuation process and for the redefinition of the parent-child relationship in particular (Aquilino, 1997; Flanagan et al., 1993), we considered the impact of emerging adults' place of residence when investigating associations between two domains of parental psychological control and two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation. Contrary to expectations, emerging adults who live in the parental home did not display a more dysfunctional dependent orientation. Hence, continued coresidence with parents in emerging adulthood cannot be explained from a tendency to overly seek closeness to others at the expense of the achievement of

independence. Analogously, a dysfunctional independent orientation did not occur more often in the independent living arrangements. Taken together with recent findings by Kins et al. (2011), the decision to leave the parental home does not seem to stem from a strong preoccupation with individuality and a rejection of connectedness. Although the act of home leaving forms an important step in the transition to adulthood (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999), it is not strongly determining or determined by the course of the process of separation-individuation. In a second step, it was examined whether associations between parental psychological control and disturbed separation-individuation were different depending on the emerging adults' residential status. However, few moderation effects were found, indicating that—irrespective of whether emerging adults live in the parental home or have moved away—parental psychological control may relate a problematic resolution of the separation-individuation process. These findings add to the limited body of research on parenting in emerging adulthood, providing evidence for the fact that even in emerging adulthood parents remain important sources of influence (Aquilino, 2006; Kins et al., 2011; Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Berzonsky, & Goossens, 2007; Nelson et al., 2011).

Limitations

Several limitations to the methodology of the current study should be noted. First, findings of this study are based on a nonrepresentative sample of mainly White, well-educated emerging adults and their parents from intact families. A second limitation is the use of self-reports to measure dependency-oriented and achievement-oriented parental psychological control. Although we included both emerging adult and parent reports on the two domain-specific types of psychological control, some of the obtained findings may be inflated due to shared method variance. Particularly when relying exclusively on emerging adult reports, findings may emerge due to methodological artifacts. For instance, it is possible that our findings with emerging adult reports of DPC and APC are simply a reflection of the fact that emerging adults with difficulties in the

developmental process of separation-individuation perceive their parents as more psychologically controlling. Yet, despite the limitations of self-reports and shared method variance we believe it is instructive to include child reports in the analyses, because it is particularly the child's perception or subjective experience of the parenting behavior that will affect its functioning. Future research that replicates our findings, using more diverse methods (e.g., observation studies) to operationalize parents' use of psychological control in both domains is however needed. Finally, the cross-sectional study design of the study limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal research is needed to determine the right time-order sequence between the study constructs.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Overall, the findings of this study challenge the notion that psychological control would, by necessity, lead to a dependent orientation where children fail to differentiate themselves from their parents and, driven by feelings of loyalty and separation anxiety, remain dependent on their parents. It appears that, psychological control might just as well relate to a pathologically independent stance where children have an unhealthy need to prove themselves and to differentiate themselves from others. As psychological control may also lead to a heightened (or even excessive) salience of independence, these findings suggest that the inhibition of independence is not a defining or key ingredient of psychological control. Instead, Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010) argued that the essence of psychological control is its *pressuring* nature. Irrespective of how psychological control is expressed, children are likely to feel manipulated and pressured to behave in particular ways. Depending on the locus of parents' psychological control (i.e., on dependence and closeness versus individual achievement and independence) children would feel pressured to develop towards dependence or independence. Because their development is regulated by feelings of pressure and coercion, their development is unlikely to be healthy and may even turn out to be dysfunctional.

In our view, these findings have particular relevance for future research on the cross-cultural relevance of parental psychological control. It has been argued by some scholars (e.g., Chao & Aque, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007) that psychological control is comparatively less harmful in collectivist cultures compared to individualist cultures. This would be the case because psychological control hampers independence and individuality, values that are more strongly endorsed and approved in Western societies compared to collectivist and Eastern societies. The present findings, however, show that psychological control is relatively orthogonal to the question whether parents promote independence or dependence. If it is true that psychological control is more about pressure and the inhibition of volition than it is about the inhibition of independence, then psychological control would be a relevant parenting dimension across cultures. In theories such as self-determination theory, for instance, it is argued that the need to experience feelings of volition and self-endorsement (which is antithetical to the experience of pressure and coercion), represents a universal need and a key ingredient for adaptive development across the globe (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Consistent with this theory, research indeed increasingly demonstrates that psychological control is related to maladaptive developmental outcomes across cultures (e.g., Ahmad & Soenens, 2010; Barber et al., 2005; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009; Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, & Mouratidis, 2012). Future research may obtain more refined insights in the prevalence, manifestation, and developmental outcomes of psychological control across cultures by studying the domain-specific expressions of psychological control and their associated types of dysfunctional separation-individuation.

Another important direction for future research is to examine whether the types of dysfunctional separation-individuation serve a mediating role between parental psychological control and developmental outcomes. Further, it could be hypothesized that DPC and APC and their corresponding types of dysfunctional separation-individuation relate to differentiated types of maladaptive developmental outcomes. In the domain of depression, for instance, DPC and

dysfunctional dependence might be related primarily to interpersonal symptoms of depression (e.g., loneliness) whereas APC and dysfunctional independence might be related primarily to achievement-related symptoms of depression (e.g., inferiority and guilt).

Chapter 9

General Discussion

Drawing upon the results presented in this dissertation, some general conclusions are discussed in this final chapter. These conclusions are broader than the detailed reports of the results presented in the previous chapters. Because we do not only want to address a public of scholars and academics, but also emerging adults and their families as well as practitioners who work with emerging adults, we aimed at translating our main findings into more practical implications. Furthermore, some limitations of the present dissertation are discussed and interesting avenues for future research are formulated.

Conclusions and Practical Implications

In Westernized postindustrial societies, the transition to adulthood is nowadays happening later then ever. Cultural and societal changes at the turn of the 21st century are in part expected to be responsible for this longer road to adulthood. The evolution to an information-based economy for instance, requires higher levels of education. However, after all that schooling, few entry-level jobs are available, keeping young people financially dependent on their parents. As a result, a substantial number of young people in their twenties postpone the onset of taking on adult roles and responsibilities. Moreover, birth control possibilities and the resulting acceptance of premarital sex and unmarried cohabitation have also contributed to the delay of traditional markers of adulthood, like marriage and becoming a parent (Arnett, 2004). During this extended period towards adulthood young people feel neither like an adolescent nor like an adult yet. Therefore, this period is increasingly acknowledged as a distinct developmental phase in life that is referred to as *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2000). During this stage in life, young people get the most chances to try out various possibilities in different areas of life (e.g., work, love, world views) without having to make long-term commitments. As a consequence, emerging adulthood is an exciting period with high hopes and big dreams as anything is still possible and everything lies within reach. However, the downside of these endless possibilities is that emerging adulthood is also a time of doubts and insecurities (Arnett, 2004). The results of the present dissertation provide evidence for the fact that emerging adulthood is a stimulating yet difficult and complex phase in life. In Chapter 3, for instance, the ambivalent state of emerging adulthood was clearly reflected in the face-to-face open-ended interviews with people in their mid-twenties.

As part of the general delay in the transition to adulthood, young people also tend to live increasingly longer in the parental home or return to the parental household after a period of independent living (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Although it is nowadays perfectly accepted to leave the parental home for other reasons than family formation, demographics

in Western societies have consistently shown an increasing tendency for emerging adults to co-reside with their parents since the 1980s. In popular media a lot of questions reflecting underlying concerns about this "failure to launch" or "boomerang kids" have emerged: Is this a good thing or bad thing? Should parents allow their children to continue to live in the parental home or should they encourage them to find a place of their own? From the perspective of separation-individuation theory (SIT; Blos, 1979), it was hypothesized that continued coresidence with the parents might be a bad thing. According to SIT, the child should gradually relinquish psychological dependence from parents in order to become a self-sufficient person. Living in the parental home during emerging adulthood might hamper this process, as reflected in emerging adult's lower levels of independence and less mature functioning (Elm & Schwarz, 2006; White, 2002). As a result emerging adults who live with their parents would also be less likely to develop an adult-like relationship with their parents, which could put them at greater risk for maladjustment (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Aquilino, 1997). Throughout the present dissertation we found however limited evidence in support of this assumption.

First of all, it should be noted that the various residential statuses of emerging adults in Belgium could be categorized into three different groups: co-residing with parents, living semi-independently, and living independently (see Chapter 4). In Chapter 2, a description of the emerging adults, in each of these different residential statuses, was provided in terms of criteria for adulthood. Fully independently living emerging adults displayed more mature and independent functioning than emerging adults in the other two types of residential statuses, as they were more self-supporting and more capable to run their own household. Furthermore, they seemed to have made more role transitions to adult life and more life-long commitment to others. Emerging adults who lived permanently in the parental home differed mainly from those in a semi-independent residential status in terms of their employment rate and financial capacities. That is, whereas most co-residing emerging adults were full-time employed, semi-independently living emerging adults were mainly college

students whom relied highly on their parents for financial support. Furthermore, findings in Chapter 2 additionally revealed that more adult-like functioning is positively associated with emerging adults' well-being. Taken together, these preliminary results gave the impression that continued coresidence with parents during the phase of emerging adulthood could be a bad thing as it might undermine an emerging adult's mature functioning resulting in less personal well-being.

In Chapter 4 it was indeed found that emerging adults who permanently lived in the parental household were less satisfied with their living situation than peers who had taken steps towards independent living and either lived semi- or fully independently. These lower levels of satisfaction with their dependent living situation were in turn related to less subjective well-being, providing evidence for the fact that co-residing with the parents during emerging adulthood might be negative as it is associated with maladjustment. However, additional analyses revealed that the motivational dynamics underlying one's living situation are more essential for an emerging adult's well-being than the residential status as such. Particularly, when the residential status reflected a personal and volitional choice, emerging adults experienced more well-being. Whether an emerging adult lives away from parents and, as such, displays signs of behavioral independence, or instead lives in the parental household and, as such, displays signs of behavioral dependence, is thus is less predictive of one's well-being than the degree to which an emerging adult experiences his or her living situation as freely chosen. Hence, living with one's parents during emerging adulthood is not necessarily a bad thing. What seems to count most is that an emerging adult's residential status demonstrates a self-endorsed choice, irrespective of whether this choice is to live with the parents or to reside independently. However, although some emerging adults lived with their parents because of their own volition, particularly the more independently living emerging adults experienced their residential status as a personal choice. Perhaps, living independently provides emerging adults with better opportunities for

volitional functioning, indicating that leaving the parental home might nevertheless be a normative developmental task during this stage in life.

That the residential status of emerging adults might be of less importance than we may possibly think, was also suggested by the findings in Chapter 3. By conducting face-to-face interviews with young people in their twenties, it became clear that emerging adults display a lot of similarities irrespective of whether they still live with their parents or reside away from the parental home. Particularly the ambivalent nature, characteristic of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004), surfaced in all of the interviews. This ambivalence revolved around the complex dialectical interaction between the need for independence and the need for relatedness. That is, even though all emerging adults stressed their need for independence and individuality from parents, they attached at the same time great value to the ongoing relationship with their parents. Such a struggle to find a balance between strivings for independence and strivings for closeness or connectedness is typical for the developmental process of separation-individuation (Allen, et al., 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986).

According to SIT (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975), the child needs to establish a sense of self, separate from other primary love objects (i.e., separation) and obtain its own individual characteristics or unique individuality (i.e., individuation) in order to maintain a reliable sense of individual identity in adulthood. A first process of separation-individuation is situated in early childhood, during which the child takes its first steps towards more separate and independent functioning (Mahler, 1963; Mahler et al., 1975). A second process of separation-individuation takes place in adolescence and describes how the child separates itself further from the parents and actively searches for who s/he is and what s/he wants in life (Blos, 1967, 1979). During both processes of separation-individuation, the child oscillates between the need to endorse the recently gained independence and a wish to remain connected to the parents (Josselson, 1980; Mahler et al., 1975). In order to resolve this imbalance, the relationship with the parents needs to be redefined into an increasingly symmetrical relationship. Emerging adults, in particular, are challenged to

transform the hierarchical parent-child relationship into a more mutual relationship between equal adults (Aquilino, 1997; Levy-Warren, 1999). Findings in Chapter 2 and 3 demonstrate that the establishment of an equal relationship with the parents is still in progress when people are in their early to mid twenties. Hence, the separation-individuation process clearly does not end at adolescence but continues to be active and highly salient in emerging adulthood (Tanner, 2006).

Particularly, the relational nature of the separation-individuation process, implying a redefinition of the relationship with the caregivers, is highlighted in emerging adulthood. The emerging adults that were interviewed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation all seemed to be preoccupied with trying to find new ways to relate to their parents. Most of them were rather vague about what had changed since childhood and how this relationship should look like, suggesting that emerging adults and parents have little guidelines on how to interact with each other during this stage in life. The prolonged transition to adulthood in Westernized countries has extended the time parents and children are engaged in "parenting activities" together (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011). Inevitably, this situation gave rise to a lot of questions both from the side of the parents and the emerging adult, in particular on the appropriateness of certain parenting approaches, such as behavioral control, when children are legally adults but do not feel and behave like full adults yet. Counselors and practitioners could help to inform parents on how they can be emotionally available to their children and at the same time grant them enough independence. In turn, it could be informative for emerging adults to know how they can remain connected to their families without having to lose their individuality and obtained independence.

Research has yielded some evidence that the transformation of the parent-child relationship towards mutuality would be particularly difficult when emerging adults and parents live under the same roof (Aquilino, 1997; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). As a result, it was hypothesized that continued coresidence with parents during emerging adulthood might be associated with

more problematic separation-individuation. Throughout this dissertation, we found however no evidence for this assumption. First, using a general measure of dysfunctional separation-individuation (Chapter 5), no relationship was found between emerging adults' residential status and disturbances in the separation-individuation process. However, given that separation-individuation is about the resolution of a complex dialectal interaction between independence and relatedness (Allen et al., 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), it was argued that problems in the separation-individuation process might manifest in at least two different ways. Specifically, problematic separation-individuation may occur when the need for relatedness is stressed at the expense of the need for independence and vice versa. A dysfunctional dependent orientation would reflect a tendency to excessively seek closeness to others at the expense of achieving independence, whereas a dysfunctional independent orientation would reflect a tendency to be strongly preoccupied with individuality and to avoid any kind of connectedness. In Chapter 7 empirical evidence is given for the distinction between these two qualitatively different types of separation-individuation. Following from this notion, we investigated in Chapter 8 the possibility that emerging adults who continue to live in the parental household are more likely to display problems in the process of separation-individuation of the dysfunctional dependent type, whereas individuals with a dysfunctional independent orientation may be leaving the parental home earlier as they have an excessive urge for independence. However, contrary to expectations results could not confirm that emerging adults who live with their parents display more problematic separation-individuation neither of the dysfunctional dependent type nor of the dysfunctional independent type. Hence, although leaving the parental home represents a real-life separation experience, it does not seem crucial for the developmental process of separation-individuation.

Nevertheless, separation-individuation remains a central developmental task in emerging adulthood that has important repercussions for an individual's identity formation and psychosocial adjustment. Research indeed shows that, when the separation-individuation process goes awry, individuals display

difficulties in establishing their identity, and more personal ill-being and interpersonal problems (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Because of these maladaptive developmental outcomes associated with problems in the separation-individuation process, we aimed to identify possible developmental antecedents of dysfunctional separation-individuation. In this dissertation we particularly focused on parenting dynamics that might interfere with the emerging adult's process of separation-individuation (i.e., separation anxiety and psychological control), because parents' tolerance for independence and individuality was expected to play an important role in the resolution of this developmental task.

As the child moves through the separation-individuation process, parents should accept gradual disengagement while remaining emotionally available to their child's needs (Aquilino, 2006; Mahler et al., 1975). However, some parents might experience their child's increasing independence as a treat, resulting in feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration about the inability to keep the child wihtin emotional and physical proximity. Such unpleasant emotional states, tied to the separation experience, are referred to as parental separation anxiety (Bartle-Haring, Brucker, & Hock, 2002; Hock, Bartle-Haring, Ellwanger, & Widaman 2001; Hock & Lutz, 1998). Parents who are highly separation anxious deny their child's increasing striving for independence and demonstrate age-inappropriate behavior towards their child (Hock et al., 2001). In Chapter 5, it was suggested that, at a later age, parental separation anxiety becomes less of an expression of genuine parental involvement and concern but instead a self-concerned parental orientation. As a result, findings revealed that emerging adults of highly separation anxious mothers and fathers demonstrated more problems in their process of separation-individuation in general. Psychologically controlling parenting practices (partly) explained this association between parental separation anxiety and dysfunctional separation-individuation. Psychological control refers to a kind of intrusive parenting behavior, whereby children are pressured through manipulative tactics—such as guilt induction, love withdrawal, and conditional approval—to comply with the parent's standards

(Barber, 1996). Separation anxious parents tend to engage in a specific form of psychological control, that is dependency-oriented psychological control (DPC; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Luyten, 2010), which is driven by parental concerns about interpersonal closeness and relatedness, as a means to enforce dependency and parent-child closeness. Such a parenting climate was in turn found to undermine the development of healthy separation-individuation, as these parents are nonresponsive to the child's needs and allow no space for individuality (Barber, 1996; Wood, 2006).

The substantial consistency of the results across mothers and fathers in Chapter 5 is noteworthy. As separation anxiety and promotion of dependence are often considered as typical maternal characteristics, especially mothers were thought to hamper the child's separation-individuation process. Fathers are in contrast believed to be more distant in the relationship with their children and more capable of balancing closeness and separateness than mothers (Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 1997; Steinberg, 1987). The findings in Chapter 5 however demonstrated that when fathers are separation anxious and pressure the child to stay within close proximity, they too can contribute to emerging adults' problematic separation-individuation.

Although these findings were interesting, they merely suggest one-way effects from the parent to the child. To address to the shortcomings of this unidirectional view, separation anxiety was studied in Chapter 6 using the social relations model (SRM; Cook, 1994; Kenny & La Voie, 1984). Rather than focusing on one specific dyad in the family, the SRM treats the family as the unit of analysis and uses a round-robin design in which each family member reports on his or her relationship with the other participating family members (Cook, 2005). This approach allowed us to gain a perception of the family dynamics that determine separation anxiety in families of emerging adults. According to the SRM (Kashy & Kenny, 1990), separation anxiety in the relationship of family member A to family member B may be a reflection of a personality attribute of A (i.e. actor effect), due to characteristics of the perceived partner B (i.e., partner effect), specific for the unique relationship between A and B (i.e., relationship

effect) or a reflection of the separation anxious climate of the whole family in which all individuals and relationships are embedded (i.e., family effect). Results revealed that in families of emerging adults, characteristics of actors, specific relationships, and families as a whole contribute to the experience of feelings of separation anxiety. The significant actor effects for each of the family members indicate that separation anxiety is a stable personality attribute, which is experienced in all family relationships. Drawing on the ideas of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), individual's response to an actual separation or threat of loss might be function of a general internal working model that is operating in each specific relationship. However, separation anxiety was also found to be in part specific for the mother-child dyad, which is in line with traditional theorizing on attachment and separation (Bowlby, 1969; 1973). This means that independent of an emerging adult's and mother's general tendency to feel separation anxious, separation anxiety is also a relation-specific phenomenon in their relationship. For mothers, but not for emerging adults, this unique relationship effect was even more important as a source of their feelings of separation anxiety than their individual separation anxious working models. In addition, it is important to note that separation anxiety was not found to be reciprocal in the mother-child relationship. The absence of such feedback loops indicates that mothers and emerging adults do not strengthen each other in their feelings of separation anxiety towards each other. Although separation anxiety has been investigated particularly in parent-child relationships, the results in Chapter 6 showed that separation anxiety is also a unique feature that fathers experience in the relationship with their spouse. Finally, the small family effect signifies that separation anxiety in family relationships is partly due to the separation anxious climate of the family as a whole. The results of this SRM assessment provide valuable information for clinicians who work with families of emerging adults where feelings of separation anxiety might impede the development towards more independent and mature functioning. Considering the different family dynamics that contribute to feelings of separation anxiety in family relationships, interventions should focus on the individual, relationship,

and family level. Given that separation anxiety in family relationships is for a considerable part explained as a personality attribute, therapists should primarily concentrate on the adjustment of the general internal working model that seems to be activated when individuals are confronted with actual or anticipated loss. Furthermore, sessions should focus on tackling separation anxiety within the mother-child dyad and in the family as a whole.

In Chapter 5 it was found that separation anxiety was communicated through psychologically controlling parenting practices, which accounted for disturbances in the separation-individuation process. Particularly the promotion of dependence through such pressuring parenting tactics (i.e., DPC) was found to be associated with problematic separation-individuation. However, these findings present a rather unilateral view on disturbances in the separation-individuation process, which seems to predominate in current diagnostic models (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychological Association, 2000) and empirical research (e.g., Wood, 2006). Within this viewpoint, separation anxiety or an intolerance for being alone (i.e., dysfunctional dependence) are emphasized as the main manifestations of problematic separation-individuation. Chapter 7 however provides empirical evidence for the distinction between two qualitatively different types of problematic separation-individuation, that is dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence. For instance, whereas dysfunctional dependence was related primarily to attachment anxiety (i.e., an orientation involving fear of loss and separation anxiety in relationships), dysfunctional independence was related primarily to attachment avoidance (i.e., an orientation where people keep others at a distance and avoid intimacy). Both types of dysfunctional separation-individuation uniquely predicted psychological maladjustment in emerging adults.

In the final empirical chapter (Chapter 8), it was investigated whether psychologically controlling parenting also contributed to emerging adults' problematic separation-individuation of the dysfunctional independent type. Psychological control has typically been described as inherently independence stifling, as it would restrict the space necessary for a child to explore and express

his/her individuality (Barber, 1996, 2002). From this notion, we are inclined to think that parental psychological control is rather associated with dysfunctional dependent manifestations of problematic separation-individuation. However, there are reasons to believe that psychological control might just as well relate to an orientation of dysfunctional independence. Recent research has, for instance, differentiated DPC as a domain-specific expression of psychological control that revolves around issues of interpersonal closeness from achievement-oriented psychological control (APC), which revolves around issues of personal achievement and perfectionism (Soenens, et al., 2010). Whereas parents high on DPC use intrusive tactics as a means to keep their children within close physical and emotional boundaries, parents high on APC engage in intrusive parenting tactics to make children comply with parental standards for achievement and individual performance. In Chapter 8, it was argued and found that DPC was primarily related to the dependent type of dysfunctional separation-individuation, whereas APC was primarily related to dysfunctional independence. These findings suggest that when parents curtail their child's independent functioning, children have little experience with handling things on their own and become overly dependent on others (Soenens et al., 2010; Wood, 2006). However, this is not the only possible pathway linking psychological control to disturbed separation-individuation. When parents' love and attention is conditional upon meeting parental standards for achievement, children might strive for personal success while denying their need for relatedness (Blatt & Homann, 1992; Flett, Hewitt, Oliver, & MacDonald, 2002), which makes them more prone to problematic separation-individuation of the dysfunctional independent type.

Although emerging adults residential status was not associated with disturbances in the separation-individuation process (neither of the dysfunctional dependent or dysfunctional independent type), we still wanted to examine whether the parenting dynamics—which were found to contribute to problematic separation-individuation—were possibly different depending on emerging adults' place of residence. It was hypothesized that emerging adults who permanently live in the parental home are possibly affected more strongly by their parents'

practices than young people who have already taken steps towards independent living because they are confronted with their parents on a daily basis. However, throughout this dissertation it was consistently found that, irrespective of whether emerging adults lived in the parental home or have moved away, parental separation anxiety and psychological control contributed equally strongly to a problematic resolution of the separation-individuation process. Overall these findings add to the limited body of research on parenting in emerging adulthood (Aquilino, 2006; Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Berzonsky, & Goossens, 2007; Nelson et al., 2011), providing evidence for the fact that parents remain important sources of influence in emerging adulthood, even when emerging adults have left the parental home.

The findings of the present dissertation revealed that parental psychological control is associated with adverse developmental outcomes in emerging adulthood, and with dysfunctional separation-individuation in particular. Hence, irrespective of the child's age, psychological control seems to be a parenting dimension that has negative consequences for the child's functioning (Barber, 1996; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Psychologically controlling parents fail to take an empathic stance towards their children and use intrusive and manipulative parenting tactics as a means to pressure the child to meet the parents' agenda (Barber, 1996). Hence, throughout the present dissertation it was consistently found that parental psychological control undermines a child's development towards healthy independent functioning, including an optimal balance between independence and relatedness (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). However, psychological control not only interferes with the child's need for healthy independent functioning but also with its need for volitional functioning (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Such volitional or self-endorsed functioning has proven to be essential for an individual's personal well-being across numerous domains (for overviews, see Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Deci, 2008). For instance, with respect to emerging adults' residential status, findings in Chapter 4 showed that a residential status

that reflects a personal choice is more important for emerging adults' well-being than the residential status per se.

Because parental psychological control is associated with many adverse outcomes, even in emerging adulthood, this type of parenting behavior should be discouraged at all times. Moreover, instead of the idea of a cutoff point at which parental psychological control becomes problematic, this parenting dimension shows a continuous relation with adverse developmental outcomes (Soenens et al., 2010, see also Chapter 8). Hence, even low to moderate levels of psychological control seem to have a strong impact on the child's well-being. Counselors and clinicians should instead promote autonomy-supportive parenting, a parenting dimension that is largely opposite to psychologically controlling parenting (Grolnick, 2003).

Autonomy-supportive parents take the child's perspective, allow choices whenever possible, or offer a rationale when choices are limited, and refrain from controlling language (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & LaGuardia, 2006). Abundant research has demonstrated that autonomy-supportive parenting behavior is beneficial for the child's well-being and adjustment, as it fosters the child's volitional functioning (e.g., Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Niemiec et al., 2006; Ryan et al., 2006; Soenens et al., 2007). Chapter 4 confirmed these findings in the context of emerging adults during the home-leaving process as it was found that autonomy-supportive parenting stimulates emerging adults to choose a living situation that reflects their true preferences, which in turn contributes to their well-being. These results illustrate the ongoing importance of autonomy support in parent-child relationships during emerging adulthood. Particularly in this time of endless choices and possibilities, autonomy-supportive parenting is considered a favorable parenting climate that helps the child to make personally valuable choices.

Limitations and Suggestions for future research

Although several interesting findings emerged throughout the different empirical chapters in this dissertation, some limitations and directions for future

research are worthy to note. A first limitation relates to the samples that were used in the current dissertation. Although all study samples include emerging adults with substantial variability regarding gender, level of education, and residential status, they are nonrepresentative samples and thus we should be careful with generalizing our results to a broader population of emerging adults and parents. Moreover, all studies were conducted in Belgium and thus it remains to be examined whether similar conclusions can be obtained in other countries. Particularly, the fact that Belgium is a small country may have some specific implications for the home-leaving process of emerging adults. In general, geographical distances are small which means that emerging adults are located relatively close to the parental home even when they live away from the parents. As a consequence, Belgian semi-independently living emerging adults frequently return to stay over in the parental home (i.e., once a week) and fully independently living emerging adults have the opportunity to visit their parents regularly. It is likely that particularly semi-independent living, but also fully independent living, in emerging adulthood takes on different forms in countries where distances from the parental home are more substantial, such as the United States. Possibly, leaving the parental home might reflect a less radical rupture from parental influences for Belgian emerging adults compared to emerging adults in other countries. This could explain why we found that emerging adults' living situation as such has little to no direct impact on their functioning and well-being, but also that parenting dynamics remain important antecedents of emerging adults' functioning, even when the child has already left the parental home. Future research in countries where living away from the parents implies a considerable geographical distance is thus warranted to investigate whether these findings can be replicated.

In this dissertation, like in many other studies on dysfunctional separation-individuation, we initially focused on a dysfunctional dependent manifestation of disturbances in the separation-individuation process. Nevertheless, as healthy separation-individuation requires an optimal balance between independence and relatedness (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), it was

argued and found in this dissertation that disturbances could also be converted in an excessive urge for independence. Subsequent research on problematic separation-individuation should further elaborate on such dysfunctional independent orientation. It would for instance be interesting to investigate whether these two types of dysfunctional separation-individuation can also be distinguished in clinical populations. A clearer understanding of the manifestations of problematic separation-individuation in clinical samples and its patterns of comorbidity with other mental disorders could reveal whether inadequate coping with the issue of relatedness during the separation-individuation process can be regarded as a distinct mental disorder. Such findings could help to plead for the inclusion of dysfunctional independence as a manifestation of problematic separation-individuation, besides the separation anxiety disorder, in future editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Perhaps dysfunctional independence is currently not yet recognized as a disorder because excessive independence at the expense of relatedness is probably considered as less problematic in individualistic Western cultures than dysfunctional dependence (Kagitçibasi, 2005). Findings in Chapter 7 however showed that both dysfunctional independence and dysfunctional dependence have unique negative ramifications for personal well-being.

Another limitation is that we focused exclusively on the impact of parenting dynamics when emerging adults are in the process of home leaving and on their resolution of the separation-individuation process in particular. As emerging adults gain self-direction and make commitments outside the family of origin (Tanner, 2006), it is unlikely that only the parent-child relationship would affect emerging adults' functioning. A particularly interesting avenue for future research is to investigate the role of romantic relationships in emerging adults' transition to adulthood. In the current dissertation there were indications that being involved in a partner relationship seems to facilitate the step towards independent living. As suggested in Chapter 3, a romantic partner may satisfy an individual's need for relatedness/company in a time when the need for independence, especially from parents, is mainly emphasized. As such, being

involved in a partner relationship might help emerging adults to find a healthy balance between independence and relatedness, crucial for a healthy resolution of the separation-individuation process. However, not all emerging adults with a partner are expected to engage in healthy separation-individuation. It is for instance likely that individuals high on dysfunctional dependence are able to build and to maintain a stable partner relationship because of their extreme need for unity with others. However, one may wonder about the quality of these relationships. Therefore, it would also be interesting to explore associations between healthy versus unhealthy manifestations of separation-individuation (i.e. dysfunctional dependence and dysfunctional independence) and relationship quality and interpersonal problems.

Except for Chapter 6, which investigated separation anxiety from a family systems perspective, effects of parenting dynamics were mainly investigated in unidirectional, parent-child effects models. Such models neglect children's influence on parents. A long history of research on parent-child relationships has been based on the assumption that parents influence their children to a greater extent than children influence their parents. However in recent research on parenting, bidirectional models that take into account the co-occurrence of influences in both directions have become far more common (Kerr & Stattin, 2003). Future research should consider the effects emerging adults have on their parents when making the transition to adulthood. It is likely that the way the child deals with the developmental tasks of emerging adulthood will influence parents' attitudes and behaviors towards the child. Longitudinal research is needed to explore such reciprocal effects. Most studies in this dissertation were however cross-sectional in nature which limits the ability to infer causality. Hence, we cannot conclude with a 100% certainty that parental characteristics influence the emerging adults' developmental process of separation-individuation. Longitudinal study designs are needed to identify the correct time-order sequence of our study variables.

A final limitation concerns the fact that our findings are almost exclusively based on self-report measures. On the hand this method was

considered appropriate given the intrapsychic nature of most of the study variables in this dissertation. However, because of the well-known limitations associated with self-report methodology (e.g., shared method variance and reporting bias), future research could improve this work by using more diverse methods to operationalize the study constructs. Subsequent research could use for instance use observational methods to measure issues of separation-individuation. The autonomy and relatedness coding system of Allen et al. (1994), which measures promotion or inhibition of independence and relatedness during a family interaction task, might be a valuable alternative for questionnaire data.

General Conclusion

The present dissertation investigated emerging adults and their parents during the process of home leaving. Overall, it was found that there are no significant differences between emerging adults who live in the parental home and those who live away from the parents in terms of their development towards adulthood, and in their process of separation-individuation in particular. For all emerging adults this time in life is characterized by feelings of ambivalence as young people are trying to find a balance between independence and relatedness in the parent-child relationship. When no such healthy balance is found, individuals might develop a dysfunctional dependent or dysfunctional independent orientation, which has negative repercussions for an individual's well-being and interpersonal functioning. Psychologically controlling parenting practices were found to be associated with such inadequate coping with issues of independence and relatedness and should thus be discouraged. Instead, autonomy-supportive parenting should be promoted as this parenting style stimulates emerging adults to make self-endorsed choices, which in turn contribute to their well-being. After all, these results suggest that parents remain important sources of influence in emerging adulthood, even when the child no longer lives in the parental home.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Patronen van thuisverlaten en problematische separatie-individuatie tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid

In Westerse postindustriële maatschappijen stellen jongeren de transitie naar volwassenheid steeds langer uit (Buhl & Lanz, 2007, Fussell, Gauthier &, Evans, 2007; Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). Traditionele kenmerken van volwassenheid zoals trouwen en het ouderschap worden op de lange baan geschoven, waardoor de overgang naar volwassenheid vandaag ook minder eenduidig is geworden (Settersten et al., 2005). Hoewel de meeste jonge twintigers zich niet langer verwant voelen met adolescenten, voelen ze zich ook nog niet volwassen. Arnett (2000) lanceerde de term *emerging adulthood*, of vrij vertaald opkomende volwassenheid, om te verwijzen naar deze aparte ontwikkelingsperiode tussen adolescentie en volwassenheid. In dit doctoraatsproefschrift focusen we op deze doelgroep van opkomende volwassenen en op hun uitstelgedrag met betrekking tot het verlaten van de ouderlijke woning in het bijzonder.

Sinds de jaren ’80 is er vooral in Westerse landen een tendens merkbaar waarbij jonge mensen steeds langer bij de ouders blijven inwonen of terugkeren naar het ouderlijk huis na een korte periode van zelfstandig wonen (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi, 1997; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994). Vooral in Zuid-Europese landen, zoals Italië, Spanje en Portugal, is dit uitstelgedrag zeer uitgesproken. Maar ook in België, waar alle studies in dit proefschrift uitgevoerd zijn, vinden we een gelijkaardige trend terug. Recente cijfers tonen bijvoorbeeld aan dat het huis verlaten vóór de leeftijd van 22 jaar eerder een beperkt verschijnsel is geworden in Vlaanderen (bijna 5%). Pas op de leeftijd van 25 jaar woont iets meer dan de helft niet meer onder het ouderlijk dak (Vettenburg, Elchardus, & Walgrave, 2007). In het huidige proefschrift onderzoeken we of dit zogenaamde “Hotel Mama-fenomeen” een invloed heeft op de transitie naar

volwassenheid en de ontwikkeling naar meer onafhankelijk functioneren van de ouders, zoals gedefinieerd in het separatie-individuatie proces in het bijzonder.

Op basis van de separatie-individuatie theorie (Blos, 1979; Mahler, 1963) kan er geargumenteerd worden dat het verlaten van de ouderlijke woning tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid een cruciale stap is in het loskomen van de ouders en het verwerven van meer onafhankelijkheid. Wie onder hetzelfde dak met de ouders blijft wonen zou dus meer problemen kunnen ervaren met dit proces van separatie-individuatie, wat op zijn beurt dan weer kan samenhangen met een verminderd algemeen welbevinden. Vanuit dit oogpunt lijkt inwonen bij de ouders tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid eerder nefast en dus af te raden.

Anderzijds kan men zich afvragen of de woonsituatie van opkomende volwassenen op zich eigenlijk wel bepalend is voor het ontwikkelen van meer onafhankelijkheid en het persoonlijk welzijn in de transitie naar volwassenheid. Vanuit de zelfdeterminatietheorie (Ryan & Deci, 2000) wordt bijvoorbeeld gesteld dat niet zozeer onafhankelijkheid op zich cruciaal is voor het optimaal functioneren, maar wel het gevoel dat men autonoom handelt. Concreet betekent dit dat gedrag wordt gesteld met een gevoel van vrijheid en keuze in plaats vanuit de ervaring van druk vanuit de omgeving of vanuit de persoon zelf. Deze hypothese werd reeds bevestigd in verschillende onderzoeksdomeinen (zie Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Deci, 2008). Op vlak van de woonklimaat tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid impliceert dit dat een autonome keuze voor een woonsituatie, ongeacht of dit bij de ouders blijven wonen is of zelfstandig wonen, van primordiaal belang is voor gezond functioneren en niet zozeer de woonsituatie op zich.

In de opeenvolgende studies in dit proefschrift proberen we een antwoord te bieden op de vraag of bij de ouders wonen tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid nu al dan niet nefast is door verschillende aspecten van het thuisverlatingsproces en van de algehele transitie naar volwassenheid te belichten. In eerste instantie werd een duidelijker beeld van onze doelgroep van opkomende volwassenen tijdens het proces van thuisverlaten geschetst. Vooreerst wonen jonge mensen vandaag niet langer ofwel bij de ouders ofwel

zelfstandig. Daarentegen vinden we een brede waaier van verschillende woonvormen die op basis van statistische evidentie geclassificeerd konden worden in drie verschillende groepen, namelijk 1) bij de ouders, 2) semi-zelfstandig en 3) zelfstandig wonen. Op basis van een vragenlijstenstudie vonden we dat opkomende volwassenen die zelfstandig wonen blijk gaven van meer matuur functioneren en dat deze tekenen van volwassenheid en maturiteit geassocieerd waren met meer welbevinden. In lijn met deze bevindingen werd in een volgend onderzoek aangetoond dat opkomende volwassenen die permanent bij de ouders inwonen effectief minder tevreden waren met hun woonsituatie dan semi-zelfstandige en zelfstandige leeftijdgenoten en dat dit bijdroeg tot een verminderd algemeen welbevinden. Bijkomende analyses in ditzelfde onderzoek onthulden echter dat dit effect volledig verdween wanneer rekening werd gehouden met de mate waarin de woonsituatie van de opkomende volwassenen een eigen keuze dan wel een opgelegde keuze reflecteert. Analoog met de bevinding uit zelfdeterminatietheorie, bleek het autonoom handelen met betrekking tot de keuze van de woonsituatie meer doorslaggevend voor het persoonlijk welzijn dan de eigenlijke woonsituatie. Concreet betekent dit dat niet zozeer uitingen van zelfstandigheid (zoals niet langer bij de ouders wonen), maar wel uitingen van autonoom handelen cruciaal zijn voor gezond functioneren.

Door in directe dialoog te treden met opkomende volwassenen tijdens een interviewstudie werd eveneens duidelijk dat jonge mensen in de verschillende types woonsituaties meer gelijkenissen vertonen dan aanvankelijk gedacht. In deze interviews werd vooral het ambivalente karakter van de opkomende volwassenheid in de verf gezet. Deze ambivalentie werd voornamelijk in de ouder-kind relatie beschreven, waarbij men de nood aan meer onafhankelijkheid probeert te verzoenen met de behoefte aan verbondenheid met de ouders. Deze zoektocht naar een optimaal evenwicht tussen afstand en nabijheid is typisch voor het separatie-individuatie proces (Allen, Hauser, Eickholt, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986).

Deze bevindingen tonen aan dat bepaalde aspecten van het separatie-indivduatie proces, waarbij men zich psychologisch losmaakt van de ouders en

opzoek gaat naar de eigen individualiteit, nog steeds actief zijn tijdens de opkomende volwassenenheid (Tanner, 2006). Opkomende volwassenen zijn vooral begaan met het herdefniniëren van de relatie met hun ouders naar een meer horizontale relatie tussen gelijkwaardige individuen. Uit de interviewrapportages bleek dat de meeste opkomende volwassenen echter niet goed weten hoe deze relatie er uit moet zien of wat nu precies veranderd is ten opzichte van vroeger. Dit lijkt te suggereren dat zowel opkomende volwassenen als ouders over weinig handvaten beschikken betreffende hoe ze best met elkaar kunnen omgaan tijdens deze relatief nieuwe ontwikkelingsfase. Het uitstellen van de transitie naar volwassenheid heeft er immers voor gezorgd dat ouders ook langer een opvoedende rol toegekend krijgen waarbij kinderen op hun beurt automatisch langer in een ondergeschikte positie geplaatst worden (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011). Heel wat opkomende volwassenen en hun ouders lijken zich dan ook af te vragen tot op welke hoogte inmenging van de ouders aanvaardbaar is wanneer kinderen juridisch volwassen zijn, maar zich toch nog niet volledig volwassen voelen en/of gedragen. Binnen de eerstelijnshulp zou men zich daarom in de toekomst meer kunnen toespitsen op het informeren van gezinnen met opkomende volwassenen over hoe voldoende onafhankelijkheid en individualiteit kunnen verenigd worden met een hechte gezinsband.

Uit eerder onderzoek bleek enige evidentie dat precies de transformatie naar meer wederkerigheid in de ouder-kind relatie extra moeilijk zou verlopen wanneer opkomende volwassenen onder hetzelfde dak wonen met hun ouders (Aquilino, 1997; Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). Van daaruit werd de hypothese geopperd dat het uitstellen van het verlaten van de ouderlijke woning geassocieerd is met meer problemen in het separatie-individuatie proces. Resultaten uit de verschillende studies in dit proefschrift bleken deze hypothese echter niet te bevestigen. Vooreerst bleken opkomende volwassenen die nog permanent bij hun ouders wonen niet hoger te scoren op een algemene maat van disfunctionele separatie-individuatie dan semi-zelfstandige of volledig zelfstandige leeftijdgenoten. Omdat het separatie-individuatie proces het vinden

van optimale balans tussen afstand en nabijheid behelst, werd niettemin gesteld dat een problematisch verloop van dit ontwikkelingsproces zich zou kunnen uiten op twee verschillende manieren. Concreet betekent dit dat problemen in het separatie-individuatie proces kunnen opduiken wanneer de nood aan verbondenheid met anderen overmatig benadrukt wordt ten koste van het verwerven van voldoende onafhankelijkheid en vice versa. In het huidig proefschrift vonden we evidentie voor de opdeling van problematische separatie-individuatie in een disfunctioneel afhankelijke oriëntatie en een disfunctioneel onafhankelijke oriëntatie. Hierbij aanlsuitend werd de bedenking gemaakt dat verbanden tussen de woonsituatie tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid en separatie-individuatie mogelijks gemaskeerd blijven met het gebruik van een ongedifferentieerde meting van problematische separatie-individuatie, omdat nestblijvers vooral een overmatige tendens tot afhankelijkheid zullen vertonen terwijl nestverlaters eerder een overmatige nood aan onafhankelijk hebben. Deze hypothese werd echter opnieuw niet bevestigd, waardoor we kunnen besluiten dat hoewel het verlaten van de ouderlijke woning een reële separatie-ervaring weerspiegelt, deze niet cruciaal blijkt zijn voor het verloop van het eigenljke separatie-individuatie proces.

Omdat het separatie-individuatie proces centraal staat tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid en belangrijke gevolgen heeft voor de identiteitsvorming en het psychosociaal welbevinden (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002), hebben we ons in een aantal studies in dit proefschrift toegespitst op mogelijke determinanten van een problematisch verloop van dit ontwikkelingsproces. Alle onderzochte factoren situeren zich binnen de opvoedingscontext omdat het separatie-individuatie proces ook grotendeels betrekking heeft op veranderingen in de ouder-kind relatie en omdat we ervan uitgaan dat ouders een belangrijke invloed kunnen uitoefnenen op het verloop van dit proces. Er werd specifiek gefocust op de rol van ouderlijke separatie-angst en psychologisch controlerend opvoeden. Hoewel de woonsituatie van opkomende volwassenen geen verband bleek te houden met problemen in het separatie-individuatie proces, werd in deze studies telkens

bijkomend nagegaan of de effecten van deze opvoedingsdeterminanten mogelijk sterker zijn wanneer men nog steeds bij de ouders inwoont dan wanneer men niet meer dag in dag uit met elkaar samenleeft.

Sommige ouders kunnen het moeilijk vinden dat hun kind steeds onafhankelijker wordt van hen en zien dit zelfds als een bedreiging voor de ouder-kind relatie. Dit gaat vaak gepaard met gevoelens van droefheid, woede en frustratie omdat men er niet in slaagt het kind zo dicht bij zich te houden als men zou willen. Dergelijke gevoelens die geassocieerd zijn met het separatie-individuatie proces van het kind worden aangeduid als separatie-angst (Bartle-Haring, Brucker, & Hock, 2002; Hock, Bartle-Haring, Ellwanger, & Widaman 2001; Hock & Lutz, 1998). In één van de studies in dit proefschrift werd aangetoond dat kinderen van separatie-angstige ouders meer problemen met het separatie-individuatie proces vertonen tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid. Dit verband kon verklaard worden door de opvoedingsstrategieën die separatie-angstige ouders hanteren.

Psychologische controle verwijst naar een dimensie van ouderlijke opvoedingsstijl die typerend is voor ouders die hun kinderen onder druk zetten om te voldoen aan de eigen noden en wensen. Ze maken hierbij gebruik van manipulatieve technieken, zoals bijvoorbeeld schuld-inductie en voorwaardelijke aandacht (Barber, 1996). Separatie-angstige ouders bleken vooral gebruik te maken van een specifieke vorm van psychologische controle, namelijk afhankelijkheids-georiënteerde psychologische controle. Deze vorm van psychologische controle wordt gebruikt om het kind dicht bij zich te houden vanuit een ouderlijke bezorgheid voor nabijheid en verbondenheid (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Luyten, 2010).

Hoewel separatie-angst vooral als karakteristiek beschouwd wordt voor de moeder-kind relatie tonen de resultaten in de proefschrift aan dat ook separatie-angstige vaders kunnen bijdragen tot een problematisch separatie-individuatie proces in de opkomende volwassenheid door hun kind onder druk te zetten om dicht bij hen te blijven. Desondanks blijft dit vooral een unidirectionele visie op de ouder-kind relatie waarbij ouders enkel verondersteld

worden invloed uit te oefenen op hun kind. Om de verschillende gezinsdynamieken in kaart te brengen die de mate van separatie-angst bepalen, maakten we in een vervolgstudie gebruik van het social relations model (SRM; Cook, 1994; Kenny & La Voie, 1984). SRM laat ons toe om na te gaan of separatie-angst in de relatie van een familielied A met een familielid B een reflectie is van een persoonlijkheidskarakteritstiek van persoon A (actoreffect), te wijten is aan een karakteristiek van persoon B (partnereffect), specifiek is voor de unieke relatie tussen persoon A en B (relatie-effect) of bepaald wordt door het algehele gezinsklimaat (gezinseffect) (Kashy & Kenny, 1990). De resultaten van deze studie geven aan dat separatie-angst vooral als een persoonlijkheidskenmerk beschouwd dient te worden. Er bestaat met andere woorden zoiets als een separatie-angstige persoon die een algemene tendens vertoont tot separatie-angst in relaties met anderen. Verder bleek separatie-angst ook effectief een typisch aspect van de unieke relatie tussen moeder en kind, zoals traditioneel verondersteld in theorieën zoals de hechtingstheorie (Bowlby, 1969, 1973) en de object-relatie theorie (Mahler et al., 1975). Daarnaast werden nog een aantal kleinere effecten teruggevonden die erop wijzen dat separatie-angst, los van de ouder-kind relatie, ook een kenmerk kan zijn van de partnerrelatie en van het algemene gezinsklimaat. Klinische interventies in gezinnen met opkomende volwassenen waar gevoelens van separatie-angst de ontwikkeling naar meer onafhankelijk functioneren tijdens de transitie naar volwassenheid kunnen belemmeren, dienen zich dus zowel te richten op het individueel, relationeel als familiaal niveau.

Door ons te concenteren op opvoedingsdeterminanten als ouderlijke separatie-angst en afhankelijkheids-georiënteerde psychologische controle, focussen we echter vooral op het disfunctioneel afhankelijke type van problematische separatie-individuatie en gaan we voorbij aan het disfunctioneel onafhankelijk type. Daarom werd in een finale studie onderzocht of psychologisch controlerend opvoeden ook kan bijdragen tot deze uitingsvorm van moeilijkheden met separatie-individuatie. Naast afhankelijkheids-georiënteerde psychologische controle werd recentelijk een andere vorm van

domein-specifieke controle geïdentificeerd, namelijk prestatie-georiënteerde psychologische controle (Soenens et al., 2010). Ouders die deze laatste vorm van psychologische controle gebruiken zetten hun kind via controlerende strategieën onder druk opdat het zou voldoen aan hun behoeftes voor prestatie en succes. Terwijl afhankelijkheids-georiënteerde psychologische controle hoofdzakelijk geassocieerd is met problemen in het separatie-individuatie proces van het afhankelijke type, bleek prestatie-georiënteerde psychologische controle vooral samen te hangen met problemen van het onafhankelijke type.

De gevonden verbanden tussen de ouderlijke determinanten en problemen in het proces van separatie-individuatie bleken in geen enkel van de studies in dit proefschrift gemodereerd te worden door de woonsituatie van de opkomende volwassene. Dit betekent dat ouderlijke separatie-angst en psychologische controle even sterk geassocieerd zijn met moeilijkheden in het separatie-individuatie proces, ongeacht of men nog bij de ouders inwoont of niet. In overeenstemming met het voorlopig beperkte aantal studies naar opvoeding tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid (Aquilino, 2006; Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Berzonsky, & Goossens, 2007; Nelson et al., 2011) kunnen we dus besluiten dat ouders belangrijke bronnen van invloed blijven tijdens de opkomende volwassenenheid, ongeacht of men reeds het huis verlaten heeft of niet.

Psychologische controlerend opvoeden lijkt onlosmakelijk geassocieerd te zijn met negatieve consequenties voor de ontwikkeling van het kind (Barber, 1996; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). De resultaten uit dit proefschrift bevestigen dit door aan te tonen aan dat psychologische controle de ontwikkeling naar gezond onafhankelijk functioneren, met een optimale balans tussen afstand en nabijheid, belemmert tijdens opkomende volwassenheid. Naast gezonde onafhankelijkheid blijkt psychologische controle ook het autonoom handelen, waarbij het kind een gevoel heeft van vrijheid en eigen keuze, te verhinderen (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Omdat deze opvoedingsdimensie geassocieerd is met zoveel negatieve uitkomsten, zelfs tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid, zouden ouders moeten vermijden om psychologisch controlerend gedrag te

stellen in hun opvoeding. Ouders zouden daarentegen moeten aangemoedigd worden om autonomie-ondersteunend te zijn. In tegenstelling tot psychologisch controlerende ouders nemen autonomie-ondersteunende ouders wel het standpunt van hun kind in, bieden ze keuzes waar mogelijk en onthouden ze zich van controlerend taalgebruik (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & LaGuardia, 2006). Onderzoek heeft reeds herhaaldelijk aangetoond dat deze opvoedingsdimensie bevorderlijk is voor het welzijn van het kind omdat het autonoom handelen aangemoedigd wordt binnen een dergelijk opvoedingsklimaat (e.g., Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Niemiec et al., 2006; Ryan et al., 2006; Soenens et al., 2007). In het huidig proefschrift werd bijvoorbeeld gevonden dat ouderlijke autonomie-ondersteuning tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid zorgt voor meer autonome keuzes met betrekking tot de woonsituatie. Omdat de opkomende volwassenheid een periode is van eindeloze mogelijkheden waarin veel keuzes gemaakt moeten worden, is ouderlijke autonomie-ondersteuning tijdens deze levensfase bij uitstek aangewezen om het kind te helpen met het maken van persoonlijk waardevolle keuzes.

Over het algemeen kunnen we besluiten dat de resulaten uit dit proefschrift aantonen dat bij de ouders wonen tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid niet noodzakelijk nefast is voor de ontwikkeling naar volwassenheid en voor het verwerven van gezond onafhankelijk functioneren, zoals gedefinieerd in het separatie-individuatie proces, in het bijzonder. Het handelen vanuit persoonlijke vrijheid en eigen keuze is daarentegen belangrijker voor het persoonlijk welbevinden dan het op eigen benen staan tijdens deze levensfase. Ouders blijven tijdens de opkomende volwassenheid een belangrijke invloed uitoefenen en kunnen hun kind helpen met het maken autonome keuzes (onder andere met betrekking tot de woonsituatie) door autonomie-ondersteunend te zijn in hun opvoeding.

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